the American Scholar

AUTUMN 1985 PRICE $4.75

Dialectical Immaterialism
FREDERICK CREWS

Analyzing the Adams Family
PETER SHAW

What I Learned About Germany's Jews
RUTH GAY

Huckleberry Finn & Its Critics
J. C. FURNAS

Portrait of a Young Physician
HOWARD F. STEIN

Louis D. Brandeis
THOMAS K. McCRAW

Feminist History
G. R. ELTON

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Arts AND LETTERS

The Harvard Book of Contemporary American Poetry

Edited by Helen Vendler

This generous anthology of the work of thirty-five postwar poets reveals the astonishing range and power of the American imagination. This is a book for those who value striking and original poetry and for readers worldwide who are curious about contemporary American experience.
448 pp.
$20.00 *Belknap*

The Inman Diary

A Public and Private Confession
Edited by Daniel Aaron

Between 1919 and his suicide in 1963, Arthur Crew Inman fashioned one of the most candid and unusual diaries ever kept by an American. It is at once an autobiography, a social chronical, and a new literary form – a nonfiction novel.
1,600 pp., 50 halftones, 2 line illus.
Two volumes, slipcased
$39.95 until December 31, 1985;
$50.00 thereafter

The King of Time

Poems, Fictions, Visions of the Future
Velimir Khlebnikov
Translated by Paul Schmidt
Edited by Charlotte Douglas

"In earlier translations Khlebnikov seemed a writer of genius, never less than astonishing, inexhaustibly stimulating, and untranslatable. Now he really does exist in English – an important, unexpected gift." – Susan Sontag
13 halftones, 6 line illus.
$18.50

Images of Man and Death

Philippe Ariès
Translated by Janet Lloyd

A fascinating plunge into the sources of history, art, and life, this book provides a visual presentation of the ways individuals and societies have reshaped their images of death.
386 b/w, 9 color halftones, 18 line illus., 2 maps
$29.95 until December 31, 1985;
$35.00 thereafter

The Literary Underground of the Old Regime

Robert Darnton

"The reader who wants a glimpse of the world behind a very unusual literature and an enlightening look at a famous time in history will get an eyeful in this surprising and entertaining volume."
– *New York Times Book Review*
$7.95 paper

Dictionary of American Regional English

Volume I, A-C
Frederic G. Cassidy, Chief Editor

How do Americans really talk – what are the hometown, everyday expressions in the many regions and sections of our country? The *Dictionary of American Regional English (DARE)*, twenty years in preparation, answers these questions and gives visible proof of the diversity – and vitality – of American language.
1,056 pp., 560 maps *Belknap*
$49.95 until December 31, 1985;
$60.00 thereafter

Available at bookstores or from
Harvard University Press
Cambridge, MA 02138

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Harvard University Press

The Harvard Book of Contemporary American Poetry

Edited by Helen Vendler

This generous anthology reveals the astonishing range and power of the American imagination. The verve, freedom, and boldness of American English are combined with the new harmonies of modern cadence. This is a book for those who value striking and original poetry.

Belknap $20.00

Images of Man and Death

Philippe Ariès
Translated by Janet Lloyd

Conceived as an "imaginary film," this lavishly illustrated work is a landmark in iconographic history and a visual presentation of how individuals have reshaped their images of death.

$29.95 until 12/31/85;
$35.00 thereafter

Dictionary of American Regional English

Volume 1, A-C

Frederic G. Cassidy, Chief Editor

What are Americans' hometown, everyday expressions in the many regions and sections of this huge country? This first volume, twenty years in preparation, gives visible proof of the diversity and vitality of American folk language.

Belknap

$49.95 until 12/31/85;
$60.00 thereafter

The Inman Diary

A Public and Private Confession

Edited by Daniel Aaron

Between 1919 and his suicide in 1963, Arthur Crew Inman kept one of the most candid and unusual diaries ever written by an American. It is at once an autobiography, a social chronicle, and a new literary form–a nonfiction novel.

While Inman reflects on everyday events and ordinary lives, he speaks directly of his own fears and fantasies. As Inman bares his heart and mind, the reader is coaxed and importuned into his intimacy. Inman emerges as an oddly impressive figure and his diary as an addictive narrative.

1,600 pp., 50 halftones, 2 line illus.
(2 volumes, slipcased) $39.95 until 12/31/85;
$50.00 thereafter

The World of Thought in Ancient China

Benjamin I. Schwartz

The center of this prodigious work of scholarship is a fresh examination of the range of Chinese thought during the formative period of Chinese culture. Benjamin Schwartz looks at the surviving texts of this period with a particular focus on the range of diversity to be found in them.

Belknap $27.50

The King of Time

Poems, Fictions, Visions of the Future

Velimir Khlebnikov
Translated by Paul Schmidt
Edited by Charlotte Douglas

This powerful translation of selected works of Velimir Khlebnikov–one of the great, . untranslated Russian poets of this century, and the creative genius behind the Russian Futurian movement–shows us his startling originality, modernity, and linguistic virtuosity.

$18.50

79 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA 02138

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Harvard University Press

George Eliot and Blackmail

Alexander Welsh

Welsh brings fresh perspective to George Eliot as he probes the management and exploitation of secrets in her novels.

$24.00

Coercion to Speak

Conrad's Poetics of Dialogue

Aaron Fogel

In this analysis of Conrad's narrative craft, Aaron Fogel explores the theory and use of dialogue. His readings range widely over Conrad's fiction, focusing especially on *Nostromo, The Secret Agent,* and *Under Western Eyes.* $22.50

(Courtesy, Trustees of the Boston Public Library)

Personification and the Sublime

Milton to Coleridge

Steven Knapp

In this wide-ranging, carefully argued study, Knapp explains the connection between personification and the aesthetics of the sublime. His provocative thesis sheds new light on the relationship between Romanticism and the eighteenth century. $17.50

Harvard

An Architectural History

Bainbridge Bunting
Completed and Edited by
Margaret Henderson Floyd

Here is the entire history of Harvard's architectural development. This fully illustrated book examines how changing educational goals brought complex architectural requirements to Harvard.

226 halftones, 24 line illus., 1 table

Belknap $30.00

Kinds of Literature

An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes

Alastair Fowler

"A new map of literature, a new chart of its contents . . . Fowler's anatomy of genre makes an important book."

–*Times Higher Education Supplement*

$8.95 paper

Ordinary Vices

Judith N. Shklar

"A distinguished book, full of wit, humanity, and insight . . . It is also, and more importantly, a moral philosophy for liberals."

–Michael Walzer

Belknap $7.95 paper

Fiction and Repetition

Seven English Novels

J. Hillis Miller

"[This] book does what good criticism must do: reanimate familiar texts by asking contemporary questions of them, thus clarifying the texts and deepening their mysteries."

–*New York Times Book Review*

$7.95 paper

79 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA 02138

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the American Scholar

Published for
General Circulation
by
PHI BETA KAPPA

EDITORIAL BOARD

G. W. BOWERSOCK
LAWRENCE A. CREMIN
ROBERT DARNTON
FREEMAN DYSON
PETER GAY
JOHN GROSS
GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

BARBARA TUCHMAN

HILTON KRAMER
BERNARD LEWIS
EDWARD LUTTWAK
ARNALDO MOMIGLIANO
EDWARD SHILS
CAROL HOUCK SMITH
JACOB STEIN

JOSEPH EPSTEIN, *Editor*
CATHERINE S. SIMS, *Consulting Editor*
JEREMY BERNSTEIN, *Contributing Editor*
JEAN STIPICEVIC, *Managing Editor*
SANDRA COSTICH, *Associate Editor*
LISA McAULIFFE, *Poetry Editor*
THOMAS NIEMAN, *Editorial Assistant*
CARLEY STRAUGHAN, *Subscription Manager*

Advertising Representative: CREATIVE IMAGES, INC., 2108 Kingshouse Road, Silver Spring, Maryland 20904. Telephone: 301-384-2440. *U.S.A. Newsstand Distribution:* EASTERN NEWS DISTRIBUTORS, INC., 111 Eighth Avenue, New York, New York 10011.

THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR (ISSN 0003-0937), published quarterly since 1932 by the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. Copyright © 1985 by the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa.

POSTMASTER: Send all change of address notices, undeliverable copies, subscription orders, and other mail to Editorial and Circulation Offices, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Subscription rates: $4.75 a copy, $16.00 one year, $39.00 three years, foreign and Canadian $3.00 a year additional for postage.

Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by return postage. No responsibility is assumed for their loss or injury, or for the views expressed in articles published.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Cornell Studies in Security Affairs

THE MILITARIZATION OF SPACE
U.S. Policy, 1945–1984

By PAUL B. STARES. The author provides the first detailed account of U.S. space defense policy and programs, paying particular attention to the development of antisatellite weapons. $25.00

MAKING THE ALLIANCE WORK
The United States and Western Europe

By GREGORY F. TREVERTON. This insightful new book challenges the view that the Atlantic alliance is in deep crisis and provides a much-needed framework for assessing the effectiveness of the alliance and making policy within it. $24.95

THE ULTIMATE ENEMY
British Intelligence and Nazi Germany, 1933–1939

By WESLEY K. WARK. "Clearly, often cleverly and brilliantly written. It has wit and panache. And, most of all, the author brings a massive intelligence and industry to bear on one of the most important topics of interwar history."—Paul M. Kennedy, Yale University. $29.95

THE WRONG WAR
American Policy and the Dimensions of the Korean Conflict, 1950–1953

By ROSEMARY FOOT. Concentrating on the debate over expansion of the Korean conflict, which was far more intense and protracted than previous accounts have suggested, Foot reveals the strains it caused both within the U.S. bureaucracy and between America and its allies. $29.95

Now in paper...

THE ILLOGIC OF AMERICAN NUCLEAR STRATEGY

By ROBERT JERVIS. "A rigorous and muscular argument in the finest traditions of American strategic studies."—Lawrence Freedman, *The New Republic*. "Should shape all future debate."—*Times Literary Supplement*. $9.95

CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE

By JOHN J. MEARSHEIMER. "A carefully argued and well-written study that should immediately raise the quality of the debate."—*The New Republic*. "Intelligent, well-researched."—*Foreign Affairs*. $12.95

Also of interest...

THE BREZHNEV POLITBURO AND THE DECLINE OF DETENTE

By HARRY GELMAN. "A remarkable, indeed an essential book. . . . It combines analysis of Soviet foreign policy with excellent Kremlinology."—*Problems of Communism*. $12.95 paper

New Edition in Paper

THE WAR FOR LEBANON, 1970–1985
REVISED EDITION–Updated to include events of the past 2 years

By ITAMAR RABINOVICH. "Deserves to be widely-read."—*Middle East Journal*. "Remarkably objective."—*Foreign Affairs*. "Fair and eminently lucid."—*Middle East Studies*. $9.95

CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS

P.O. Box 250, Ithaca, New York 14851

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CONTENTS

Everybody's Talking at Me
Aristides 439

Dialectical Immaterialism
Frederick Crews 449

What I Learned About German Jews
Ruth Gay 467

Portrait of a Young Physician
Howard F. Stein 485

All in the Family: A Psychobiography of the Adamses
Peter Shaw 501

The Crowded Raft: *Huckleberry Finn* & Its Critics
J. C. Furnas 517

Louis D. Brandeis Reappraised
Thomas K. McCraw 525

A Decent Impersonality
Christopher Clausen 537

Gershom Scholem
Ada Rapoport-Albert 541

POETRY

Dark Preface
Peter Makuck 466

Reunion
Patricia Hooper 484

The Protection of Dust
Laura Fargas 500

A Distant Cry
Lucy Shawgo 536

BOOKS

History According to Saint Joan
G. R. Elton 549

Reviews
James Hitchcock, Sonya Rudikoff, Donna Rifkind, G. W. Bowersock 555

THE READER REPLIES 571

INDEX 573

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

With five never-before-published stories, a fresh look at the young Hemingway

Along With Youth

Hemingway, The Early Years

PETER GRIFFIN

Foreword by JACK HEMINGWAY

Peter Griffin has drawn upon a wealth of previously unpublished material—including numerous letters and five of Hemingway's early short stories that appear here in their entirety—to trace the formative years of one of America's most celebrated and influential authors. This book examines in richer detail than any previous biography Hemingway's midwestern childhood, his relationships with his parents, his journalistic apprenticeship, and his experiences as a Red Cross volunteer during World War I. Griffin paints a vivid picture of the people, places, and events that shaped Hemingway as a man and a writer. This is the first installment of what promises to become the definitive Hemingway biography for this generation.

275 pp. 25 illus. $17.95

The Body in Pain

The Making and Unmaking of the World

ELAINE SCARRY

A ground-breaking meditation on pain and its relation to language and creativity, *The Body In Pain* analyses physical suffering in numerous contexts and is based on massive original research in sources ranging from court transcripts to Amnesty International documents.

"One of the most significant books in language, philosophy and literature of the coming years."—**Emory Eliott, Princeton University**

"An absolutely astonishing achievement . . . I believe it will change many lives, not by persuasion, but by widening the scope of consciousness."—**Allen Grossman, Brandeis University**

336 pp. $24.95

The Oxford Companion to English Literature

5th Edition

MARGARET DRABBLE, *Editor*

Thoroughly revised and incorporating the very latest scholarship, this matchless guide includes new entries on foreign language authors now well known in translation, articles on composers and visual artists whose work has been touched by literature, science fiction and children's literature.

"It's worth its weight in words." —Tom D'Evelyn, *Christian Science Monitor*

"A wonder of brisk and diligent attention."—Hugh Kenner, *Washington Post*

"This fifth edition incarnates a living sense of tradition, at once perfectly continuous with the old undertaking and yet manifestly a new book, sensitive not to fashion merely but to the spirit of the age."—Christopher Ricks, *The Sunday Times*, London

1,000 pp. $35.00

Dorothy Wordsworth

ROBERT GITTINGS and JO MANTON

A fascinating profile of a central female figure in the Romantic literary circle—this is the first biography of Dorothy Wordsworth in 50 years and the first book to treat her as a person in her own right, delving beyond the literary to present a revealing picture of a woman of the early nineteenth century. Examining her *Journals* and newly re-edited *Letters*, the authors explore the relationships of this complex woman with her friends, including Samuel Coleridge, and her brother William.

208 pp. 12 illus. $17.95

At better bookstores or order from

Oxford University Press

Box 900 • 200 Madison Avenue • New York, NY 10016

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Life and Letters

Everybody's Talking at Me

ARISTIDES

In the realm of boredom, as in so many others, it is better to give than to receive, and I would have it known that, as a university teacher, I give—and give plenty—at the office. With the aid of my scintillating talk, I have in my day put a student or two to sleep. When first I noted this strange power, I was a touch alarmed and more than a touch resentful. In the fullness of time I have gotten over both the alarm and the resentment. Except in seminar rooms, where there is the danger of injury through their striking their heads against a table top, I allow such students to snooze away, drawing the line only at passionate snoring. I suppose I could wake them, but I don't like a scene. Besides, my reasoning is, if my students cannot arise from my classes inspired, at least they will awake refreshed.

To treat a brawny lad or an indelicate lass, after a night of who knows what wild roistering, to a brief nap through the aid of my sometimes intricate commentary on the novels of Joseph Conrad or Henry James seems to me no grave disgrace. It happens to others and, I prefer to think, perhaps even to the best of teachers. For all one knows, Aristotle may well have sent his lot of Athenian youths into the arms of Morpheus with his lectures on Prior Analytics; doubtless at times even his best student's attention must have strayed. To be a bit boring is part of the job of the teacher; it is, you might say, ed. biz, not everything about which is appealing.

But it is given only to a few to bore a throng. I am one of those few. The throng in question numbered on one occasion somewhere between six and seven hundred; the setting was a middle western university, to which I had been invited as a guest lecturer. The school had decided to use one of my books for its freshman composition course—provided, that is, that I agreed to visit the campus, meet with the students, and deliver a lecture. In teaching the book and bringing its author to the school, officials there apparently wished to demonstrate to the students the imperfection of the work and the life both. Financially it seemed a good deal. Driven by lucre, flown by United, I arrived on campus with a typed, double-spaced, twenty-one-page lecture entitled "Is There a Literary Life Before Death?" clutched in my warm fist.

A hectic visit was planned. Dollar value was to be exacted. Mine was one of those schedules that read "11:00–11:10 — author free"; otherwise the author was fully occupied. The two hours before the lecture were given over to a dinner with students and a fireside chat with the author. At roughly a quarter to eight the author was marched over, without aid of tumbril, to the large church in which his lecture was to be given. A church, according to Mark Twain, a practiced lecturer, is a fatal setting for a secular talk; people are unaccustomed, and hence unwilling, to give way to laughter in a church. About many things Mark Twain did not know diddly, but about lectures in churches he was brilliant. At five of eight the students and a few faculty members filed in; the author later learned that attendance at this lecture was compulsory. A compulsory lecture delivered in a church—this, then, was my assignment.

But I had a secret weapon. In my hand was not a list of fifty-seven Communists currently working in the State Department but an hour-long talk completely over the heads of my audience. I did not know this when I began, but it soon became evident. I started with a little joke. "The title of my lecture," I announced, "is, 'Is There a Literary Life Before Death?' Please note that I do not intend to discuss the other side of this question: Is there a literary life after death? That is the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more interesting question, but on it the data just now is rather thin." This was greeted by puzzled silence. My lecture proper began with what I thought was an amusing anecdote. Apparently I was alone in thinking it so. Before I arrived at page 2 I had to allow to myself, No doubt about it, this is not going smoothly.

I thought I had interlarded my lecture with witticisms, aperçus, interesting formulations. My audience, again, evidently thought otherwise. Occasionally, the sound of a raucous masculine laugh rang out, echoing in the vasty deep of the church. Where are you, brother? I wondered, as I droned away at my lecture. I scanned the church to find the eyes of this solitary appreciative auditor, but all I could discover were the eyes of youthful students that wore the ophthalmological equivalent of Gone Fishing signs. As I finished each page of this lecture, I felt I would have done well to fold it into a paper airplane and sail it over the heads of my audience, there to follow the words printed upon it, which had also sailed over their heads. I felt I was standing at that lectern in that church for something like a fiscal quarter—and a very poor fiscal quarter at that. Will time, I asked myself, drag so in hell?

And then something rather odd happened. I began to be amused by the comedy of my own situation. Here I was, babbling away, boring the pants off some six hundred or so people, causing them to long for their beds and to be at last rid of me, the man who was keeping them from beer and sex and who knows what other diversions. I thought of Henry James who, when relieved of his job as correspondent for the New York *Tribune* after being told that his articles had been above the heads of that paper's readers—"too good" for them is the way the editor put it—of Henry James who replied that "If my letters have been 'too good' I am honestly afraid that they are the poorest I can do, especially for the money."

Certain phrases in my own lecture now nearly caused me to laugh aloud. One in particular that really got to me was the front portion of a sentence that read: "The best guide to this life are the Brothers Goncourt, Edmond and Jules, who in the journals that they wrote in collaboration—and which Edmond continued after the death of Jules in 1870. . . ." Reading this sentence I thought, No doubt these kids cannot have heard of the Goncourt brothers—neither after all had I at their age—but I am fairly certain that they never even heard of 1870. I proceeded, slowing my pace now, quite enjoying myself, and finally rather sorry to end, which I did to applause of a strength that did not quite merit the word *wan*. Somehow I was able to restrain myself from blowing kisses and bowing deeply from the waist.

Not all my public performances have been so uniformly dismal. One of the nicest days of my adult life was the day I gave the H. L. Mencken Memorial Lecture at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore. It was a sunny Saturday afternoon, and, standing out in front of the library, I recall wondering whoever would wish to waste such an afternoon on listening to a lecture. As I entered the hall in which the lecture was to be given, I encountered a friend. "Kenneth," I said, "what are you doing here?" "I don't know," he answered. "Frankly I'd rather be in Fenway Park." So, truth to tell, would I. But more than four hundred people showed up—an overflow crowd. And a fine crowd it was, composed not principally of professors or students but of a lovely diversity of people, of all ages and social classes, who were there less to hear me than to honor the memory of H. L. Mencken, their city's great writer. Afterward Mencken's bartender at the Rennert Hotel came up to show me a letter from Mencken, which he had had framed, that congratulated him, the bartender, on his craft.

I could be mistaken—the distorting egotism of the performer is never to be trusted in these matters—but I thought the lecture went very well. The audience laughed where I hoped it would and seemed thoughtful where I had hoped to provoke thought. The applause at the close felt neither perfunctory nor phony. A coffee was served after the lecture, to which the public was invited, and a dinner of the Mencken Society was held later in the evening in a magnificent room of the Peabody Conservatory Library. An official of the Pratt Library handed me my check in an envelope, and it turned out to be for more than had been promised. At the coffee a stream of people came up to tell me how much pleasure my lecture had given them—and I determined to believe them. At the dinner I asked the man who was the outgoing president of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ives and Art

FOOTSTEPS: Adventures of a Romantic Biographer
Richard Holmes. In this alluring, eventful account of the drama inherent in writing about other people's lives, the acclaimed biographer of Shelley follows in the footsteps of four great writers—Mary Wollstonecraft, Gerard de Nerval, Shelley, and Robert Louis Stevenson—attempting to get at the heart of their lives and art. "An extraordinarily lucid exploration of what goes on beyond simple research and recitation of facts in the presentation of quality biography."—ALA *Booklist* Elisabeth Sifton Books • Viking.
0-670-32353-5 288 pp. $18.95

GEORGE ELIOT: A Biography
Gordon Haight. Unrivaled for its completeness, sympathy, and drama, this fascinating account of the great novelist's life stands as the definitive biography of George Eliot. At once a monumental, scholarly account of a remarkable woman and a brilliant picture of Victorian life and letters, "this is a masterly biography, in which industry is matched by urbanity."—*The New York Review of Books* Penguin.
0-14-058025-5 640 pp. $9.95

IBSEN
Michael Meyer. Available in paperback for the first time, this marvelous portrait of Ibsen and his theatre is colored with the whole imaginative canvas of nineteenth-century Europe. "Clearly the definitive life of Ibsen in our generation....This enthralling biography...does justice, both in scholarship and understanding, to one of the most fascinating creative artists ever to find the chief expression of his gifts in drama."—Anthony Storr, *Washington Post* Penguin.
0-14-058003-4 912 pp. $8.95

JAMES AGEE: A Life
Laurence Bergreen. An unforgettable, sympathetic, yet startlingly honest portrait of a tormented genius, this first full biography of the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *A Death in the Family* and *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* captures the man behind the extravagant, profligate legend. "Vivid....This well-researched book is the dispassionate biography we need."—Philip French, *The New York Times Book Review* Illustrated. Penguin.
0-14-008064-3 480 pp. $8.95

ORSON WELLES
Barbara Leaming. A major event, this is the only full-length, in-depth firsthand portrait of the flamboyant American genius—onstage, behind the camera, in love, or under the gun—written with Orson Welles's complete cooperation. "A distinguished gift to American arts and letters...the serious, affectionate big book that hungry Wellesians have awaited for decades."—*Kirkus Reviews* Illustrated. Viking.
0-670-52895-1 608 pp. $19.95

VIKING PENGUIN INC.
Academic Marketing Department, 40 West 23rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10010

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mencken Society, an insurance man in his sixties, what it was he liked about Mencken. "Reading him," he said, "makes me happy." So, I thought, has this day in his honor in his native city made me happy.

Yet lecturing, it has not taken me long to appreciate, is not my métier. I like the money when it is more than I deserve; I like the sociability between lecturer and audience when it exists; I like the applause and praise when it seems genuine. It is, really, only delivering the lecture that I don't much care for. Part of it is the nervousness I feel about being able to please a crowd. A recent survey revealed that Americans fear only cancer more than public speaking. Although never surveyed, I am one of those Americans. I scarcely ever speak before more than ten people without an initial flutter of nerves. The word *flutter* suggests butterflies, the reigning metaphor for such nervousness. I feel too old for butterflies; perhaps what I get are moths. In any case, something is fluttering when the prospect of speaking to an audience of any substantial size is before me.

But for me there is a deeper problem than nerves, and this is that I do not think all that much of the lecture either as a form of entertainment or as a medium of education. Today I give lectures, but, with rare exceptions, I do not go to them. As a college student, of course, I was bound to attend my share of lectures, but I remember chiefly two things about my attendance at such lectures: a frantic mental scampering to take notes on material that I judged might be on examinations (six characteristics of the late Renaissance—that sort of thing) and a heavy boredom that all too often elided nicely into slumber. Occasionally, during my student days, I would note items of intellectual style in a lecturer—the dramatizing quality of German lecturers, the casualness of English ones—or acquire such little intellectual tips as the proper pronunciation of *banal*. Sometimes I would go to a lecture or a reading to see an artistic celebrity; for precisely this reason—to *see* quite as much as to hear—I went, as a young man, to poetry readings given by Marianne Moore, e. e. cummings, and Carl Sandburg. I went to these readings, in effect, as an intellectual and artistic groupie. On occasion I even now go to a lecture by a scholar I revere: Arnaldo Momigliano or Edward Shils, Hugh Trevor-Roper or E. H. Gombrich. Approaching the age of fifty, I remain an intellectual groupie.

Far and away the most effective lectures I have ever attended were those I went to as a private during basic training in the peacetime army. What they effected was deep and contented sleep. The army could do with subject matter what it did with food: make it all seem alike and all supremely boring. Be the subject Communism or chemical warfare or nuclear attack, lectures in the army, listened to on cold mornings in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, while I was wearing fatigues, boots, and a field jacket, could unfailingly put me out in somewhere under three minutes. In this they surpassed even a session of papers on literary theory at a meeting of the Modern Language Association. How I wish I had tapes of those army lectures in my possession now to replay on the infrequent nights when I suffer insomnia!

The world has never known a shortage of brilliant lecturers. Charles Dickens was famously successful as a lecturer, though his lectures were chiefly composed of dramatic readings of his own work. Mark Twain's lecturing consisted of comic turns, which he did consummately; and throughout his life he was able to call on his ability as a lecturer as a means of refilling the coffers he repeatedly emptied through his many bad business investments. Oscar Wilde's lectures in America were a very great hit, and Wilde was fond of comparing his own success in this line with Dickens's. As a lecturer, Wilde came on as an exotic; from St. Louis he instructed his agent to acquire for him "a sort of Francis I dress: only knee-breeches instead of long hose. Also get me two pair of grey silk stockings to suit grey mouse-coloured velvet. The sleeves are to be flowered—if not velvet then plush—stamped with large pattern. They will excite a great sensation. . . . They were dreadfully disappointed at Cincinnati at my not wearing knee-breeches." Emerson, as his biographer Gay Wilson Allen remarks, looked to lecturing "to be his own salvation, both for sanity and solvency"—and so it proved.

Dickens, Twain, Wilde, Emerson, all were, quite apart from their distinctly different geniuses, considerable showmen. Without this element of showmanship there can be no exciting lecturing, for entertainment is intrinsic to the successful lecture. Writers without a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

showman's flair have fared poorly as lecturers. Melville, though he needed the money desperately, was unable to make a go of it as a lecturer. Walter Pater's lectures were said to be inaudible; "a form of self-communion," Max Beerbohm called them, adding: "He *whispered* them." E. M. Forster did a certain amount of lecturing over the course of his life, but not, apparently, altogether successfully. Katherine Anne Porter recalled hearing him lecture to a political conference in Paris in 1935: "He paid no attention to the microphone, but wove back and forth, and from side to side, gently, and every time his face passed the mouthpiece I caught a high-voiced syllable or two, never a whole word, only a thin recurring sound like the wind down a chimney as Mr. Forster's pleasant good countenance advanced and retreated and returned." At Harvard, Lee Simonson remembered Santayana lecturing his students while "gazing over our heads as if looking for the sail that was to bear him home," to Europe presumably.

Henry James did a good bit of lecturing on his final trip to the United States in 1906, but his lectures, one gathers, received less than a triumphant greeting. During a lecture James gave in Chicago he noted that only three men were in the audience—thus fortifying James in his belief that in America culture was almost exclusively the possession of women—and two of the three were sound asleep before he had unwound his intricate first paragraph. Wallace Stevens preferred neither to lecture nor to give readings of his poetry. It was reported that three members of the audience fell asleep and many others fought drowsiness when Albert Einstein, in 1934, first set out his theory of relativity in English in a lecture hall at Carnegie Tech.

When Max Beerbohm was asked to lecture in America, he said he would be pleased to do so only if he could deliver his lectures out of doors at the Castle Garden and if the audience was limited to twelve people. The offer was withdrawn. Beerbohm later made a great success giving radio talks over the BBC during World War II, but he later refused to appear on television, arguing that a radio talk was a work of verbal art while an appearance on television, in the words of his biographer David Cecil, was "the naked unedited exhibition of a personality"—a case, to reverse the old maxim about children, of its being better to be heard than seen. A number of other cultural figures have preferred to be neither seen nor heard. In Edmund Wilson's infamous postcard bearing the rubric "Edmund Wilson Regrets That It Is Impossible For Him To," two of the items appearing under that rubric are "Deliver Lectures" and "Give Talks And Make Speeches." Maxwell Perkins eschewed lecturing and so, too, did S. J. Perelman. E. B. White chose not to lecture and must have disappointed many a college president who thought him the perfect commencement speaker, which when younger he probably would have been.

Then there is the category—into which I fall—of those who wish they were superior speakers but know that they are not. Tocqueville is perhaps the most distinguished man among our number. As a member of the French Assembly during the fateful year of 1848, Tocqueville hoped to lead his party but soon discovered that his considerable talent as a writer did not translate into talent as a speaker. "But skill as a writer is more hindrance than help to a speaker, and vice versa," he noted in *Recollections*. "For a well-written chapter is about as different as possible from a good speech. I soon noticed that and saw that I was classed among those speakers who are correct, straightforward and sometimes profound, but always cold and consequently powerless. Certainly my trouble is not any lack of passionate feelings, but on the rostrum a passion for expressing myself well has always momentarily driven out all other passions." Tocqueville's is, of course, exactly the correct, indeed the crucial, distinction—that between writing and speaking. The first is an intellectual act, the second, though not devoid of intellect, is finally a performance art.

This always comes as news, and as rather bad news at that, to those of us who write fairly well. (Between the pen and the lip is many a slip—too many, I regret from experience to report, for I believe I have made them all.) When I began teaching I thought to lecture my students about the authors whose books we were reading. I filled these lectures with facts, anecdotes, curiosities, things that I myself found interesting or sometimes merely amusing. My students scribbled away, furiously taking notes. I told them they need not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bother, for they would not be examined on any of this material. Industry was instantly replaced by torpor. As I prattled away, I felt I had the attention of perhaps five or six students in a class of thirty; the remainder of the class was simply not returning service. To be fair to them, these little lectures were respectable enough as compositions but not very successful as lectures. They were over-freighted with fact, for one thing; for another, though they read well enough on the page, they did not always read smoothly from the lectern. I could feel my subtleties miss the target, my ironies fizzle, my parentheses evaporate. I looked up from my text to catch the pretty Miss Goldstein's eyelids at half-mast; the red-haired Mr. Pipal, eyes completely shut, was well out of the intellectual struggle. I droned on, slowly coming to an awareness that, pedagogically, what one thinks is not necessarily what, from the lectern, one can say. Or, to put it another way, I agreed with everything I said; it was the way I said it—which was the way I would have written it—that was wrong. To underscore my point, I invite you to read this paragraph aloud, as if it were part of a lecture. As such, I believe, it is a dud.

In his essay "On the Difference Between Writing and Speaking," William Hazlitt notes: "It is a common observation that few persons can be found who speak and write equally well." The chief distinction, according to Hazlitt, has to do with time; more time is allowed for writing and reading than for speaking and listening. "In reading," Hazlitt writes, "we may go over the page again, whenever anything new or questionable 'gives us pause'; besides we are by ourselves, and it is *a word to the wise*." Listening to a lecturer, or an orator of any sort, words whiz by; one may be swept up by them, or entertained by them, or infuriated by them. But they are not around long enough to be argued with, as they can be in rereading a questionable passage in a book, for the lecturer is on to other words, while books, centuries before television was invented, have always permitted the mental equivalent of instant replay.

Along with its intellectual component, a lecture or speech is also sound and gesture, accent and emphasis, face and, yes, even garb (recall Oscar Wilde's knee-breeches). These supposedly extraneous elements can loom larger than one might prefer to think. "The most dashing orator I ever heard," writes Hazlitt, "is the flattest writer I ever read." Reading that sentence, I remember some twenty years ago working for a large educational corporation whose president used to speak fairly regularly on something he called "the knowledge explosion." He was an elegant man; he had interesting hands, which he used to fine effect. He had earlier been a colleague of Edward R. Murrow, which lent him a certain authority. He wore very good clothes. He was perpetually tanned and his face was intricately lined; his hair was gunmetal grey admixed with white. When he spoke about the knowledge explosion, one couldn't take one's eyes off him; one could almost hear a bomb go off, see a cloud go up.

A friend who worked for the same corporation, a young man no less intellectually skeptical than I, determined to get the president to write up his thoughts on the knowledge explosion for *Harper's* or the *Atlantic* or the *New York Times Magazine*. As the president of a large corporation, he said he hadn't time. My friend persuaded him merely to talk further with him about the subject, saying that he would ghostwrite the article for him. They spent a few sessions together, my friend pressing, probing, prying ideas about the great knowledge explosion out of him, or at least trying to do so. None, apparently, were there. After a week, my friend, defeated, announced that the explosion didn't seem to exist, that all the president had in mind were the rather dull notions that more people than ever were attending colleges and that computers figured to become more and more important in education. It was a wonderful speech; there just happened to be nothing behind it.

This is not, I suspect, an altogether uncommon experience. I recall not long afterward reading the speeches of Adlai Stevenson and being hugely disappointed by them. They seemed so witty, so winning, so wise when Stevenson delivered them; they were so inert, so cliché-ridden, so commonplace on the cold page. I thought Mario Cuomo's keynote speech at the 1984 Democratic Convention easily the most powerful piece of political oratory I had ever heard; reading it the next day in the *New York Times* I thought it seemed thin stuff. But the difference between speaking and writing doesn't apply to politicians alone. One of the great publishing dis-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ohio University Press
Fall 1985

GENERAL INTEREST

"Good-bye Son" and Other Stories
Janet Lewis
This collection of Lewis' short stories focuses on life's imperceptible cycles and remains as quietly haunting today as when originally published in 1946. A new story that first appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* has been added to this edition.
October 0-8040-0867-1 $19.95 Cloth
0-8040-0868-X $8.95 Paper

HISTORY

New Worlds for Old
Reports from the New World and Their Effect on the Development of Social Thought in Europe, 1500-1800
William Brandon
November 0-8214-0818-6 $26.95 Cloth
0-8214-0819-4 $13.95 Paper

The Politics of Hunger
The Allied Blockade of Germany, 1915-1919
C. Paul Vincent
September 0-8214-0820-8 $19.95

The Edwardian Temperament, 1895-1919
Jonathan Rose
October 0-8214-0821-6 $26.95

LITERATURE

Forms of Feeling in Victorian Fiction
Barbara Hardy
September 0-8214-0827-5 $21.95

Patterns of Irony in the Fables of La Fontaine
Richard Danner
September 0-8214-0824-0 $23.95

NEW PAPERBACKS

Convivial Dickens
The Drinks of Dickens and His Times
Edward H. Hewett and W.F. Axton
September 0-8214-0702-3 $12.95 illus.

Victorian Conventions
John R. Reed
October 0-8214-0828-3 $15.95

The Imaginary Reminiscences of Sir Max Beerbohm
Ira Grushow
October 0-8214-0766-X $13.95 illus.

John Updike's Novels
Donald J. Greiner
October 0-8214-0792-9 $9.95

RAVAN PRESS, SOUTH AFRICA

Distributed in North America

A Talent for Tomorrow
Life Stories of South African Servants
Suzanne Gordon
1985 0-86975-243-X $16.95 Paper

The Surplus People
Forced Removals in South Africa
Laurine Platzky and Cherryl Walker
1985 0-86975-255-3 $16.95 Paper

Workers on the Rand
Factories, Townships and Popular Culture 1886-1942. *A People's History of South Africa*, Volume 2
Luli Callinicos
1985 0-86975-227-8 $8.95

Working in South Africa
Edited by Ken Dovey, Lorraine Laughton, and Jo-Anne Durandt
1985 0-86975-263-4 $15.95 Paper

Send for a complete catalog of Fall 1985 books, including books distributed for the Center for International Studies, Ohio University: Gadjah Mada University Press, Yogyakarta, Indonesia; Ravan Press, South Africa; and Singapore University Press

Ohio University Press
Swallow Press

Scott Quadrangle 226-LFJ5
Athens, Ohio 45701-2979

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

appointments of recent years for me has been the three volumes of Vladimir Nabokov's lectures. I know extremely intelligent people who heard Nabokov deliver many of these lectures and were tremendously moved by them. Bound in books these lectures seem scarcely more than highly interesting summaries of works with occasional side comments. My guess is that the students who were moved by Nabokov's lectures were moved by Nabokov himself, the last aristocratic Russian writer, a living link to Tolstoy and Turgenev. I don't for a moment think these people were callow or even in any way wrong to be greatly moved by these lectures. I believe instead that, as one says after recounting a story that does not quite come off, you had to be there.

There are lectures and there are lectures, and then there are lectures. There are the lectures that one gives to students, and there are the lectures one gives to something called "the general public," and then there are the lectures that, while not necessarily excluding these two former groups, scholars give to their peers. Lectures can be turned into books, and lecture series—the T. S. Eliot Lectures or the Christian Gauss Seminars—have been the occasion for books. Lectures can be to books what out-of-town openings used to be to Broadway plays—trial runs in which one works out the kinks and papers over the chinks before the final production. Different lecture audiences require different lecturing etiquette. Lectures to serious scholars seem to require a prepared text, from which one reads; lectures to the general public seem most impressive if delivered without a text or with a text that one only infrequently glances down at; lectures to students seem to call for rather elaborate notes, preferably neither turning yellow nor beginning to shred at the ends and dropping from the lectern, in the manner of heavy dandruff.

The appetite for lecturing varies vastly among people who are called upon to do it. Some adore doing it, some do it out of necessity, and some loathe it. I am someone who satisfies all three conditions: I adore doing it, I must do it, I loathe doing it. I have never given a lecture without traces of the nervousness associated with stage fright (those damn moths); yet, in the very midst of a lecture, the ham absolutely triumphant in me, I have said to myself, "God, I am enjoying this." But I cannot say that I have ever felt like the narrator of Chekhov's "A Dreary Story," emeritus Professor Nikolay Stepanovitch, who says: "No kind of sport, no kind of game or diversion has ever given me such enjoyment as lecturing." In his story Chekhov compares the good lecturer to a good symphonic conductor, someone who has to be aware of twenty things at once. He has his professor remark:

> Before me a hundred and fifty faces, all unlike one another; three hundred eyes all looking straight into my face. My object is to dominate this many-headed monster. If every moment as I lecture I have a clear vision of the degree of its attention and its power of comprehension, it is in my power. . . . At one and the same minute one has to play the part of savant and teacher and orator, and it's a bad thing if the orator gets the upper hand of the savant or of the teacher in one, or *vice versa*.
>
> You lecture for a quarter of an hour, for half an hour, when you notice that the students are beginning to look at the ceiling, at Pyotor Ignatyevitch; one is feeling for his handkerchief, another shifts in his seat, another smiles at his thoughts. . . . That means that their attention is flagging. Something must be done. Taking advantage of the first opportunity, I make some pun. A broad grin comes on to a hundred and fifty faces, the eyes shine brightly, the sound of the sea is audible for a brief moment. . . . I laugh too. Their attention is refreshed, and I can go on.

Chekhov's Professor Nikolay Stepanovitch feels that "only at lectures have I been able to abandon myself entirely to passion," but for others who lecture the passion dies fairly quickly. A young and very popular professor at the university at which I teach has told me that, after giving the same course of lectures for the past several years, he now slips his lecture for the day out of his desk drawer and goes forth to deliver it to some four hundred students with no more excitement than he might feel at going out to buy the morning newspaper. It is because it has become so easy for him that he is thinking of abandoning this course to teach another. Others feel such extreme tension at the prospect of lecturing that there is no room left over in their psychic economies for passion. Many is the story of university lecturers who, in their violent nervousness, quietly go off to vomit before lecturing. William Hazlitt had to be pushed onto the stage when he began lecturing, and his first public lecture, on the subject of Hobbes,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

according to his biographer Herschel Baker, "was read so fast, and in such a low, monotonous voice, that it was hardly understood." It is good to be able to report that Hazlitt, who desperately needed the money from lecturing, became in time better and better at it.

Was it in A. J. P. Taylor's autobiography that I read about the English don who so loathed lecturing that he always chose the most obscure and unpromising subjects for his lectures, in the hope of attracting fewer than three students to them, which would allow him to cancel the lectures? His colleagues, good chaps, tumbling to his trick, regularly paid three students to show up at each of these lectures, thus forcing him to go through the full torture. A. J. P. Taylor's exploits as a lecturer run throughout his autobiography, and in his most recent book, *An Old Man's Diary*, Taylor writes: "The achievements I am most proud of apart from my books are two lectures: The Ford Lectures given as long ago as 1957, and the Romanes Lecture given in 1982—both, I need hardly say, without a script or notes." Taylor not only lectured without a script or notes (though he would when required carry cards with long quotations on them) but even refused to use a lectern. As a nervous lecturer, I must say I find this impressive. As he was standing there unprotected by a lectern, what did he do with his hands? How did he keep his feet still? If I had my druthers, I would lecture wearing a life jacket, a parachute, a crash helmet, and a bowie knife strapped to my calf.

The lecture as an educational form came to the United States fairly late in the nineteenth century. It was an import from the Continent, chiefly from Germany, where professors were great figures. German professors were scarcely considered teachers; they were scientists and thinkers who, in their lectures, shared their researches and thoughts with their students. Soon, in the United States, much more prestige attached to lecturing from a raised platform, from on high, than from working down in the trenches putting students through recitations. From the professor's standpoint, then, lecturing was greatly to be preferred. Was it—is it—preferable from the standpoint of education?

The late Alexander Gerschenkron, who was an economic historian at Harvard and himself educated on the Continent, has written about what he deemed the inefficiency of the lecture system in education (in an AMERICAN SCHOLAR essay entitled "Getting Off the Bullock Cart," Spring 1976). Gerschenkron was well aware of the psychic pleasures of lecturing—"Where else could a man get these regular opportunities for hearing himself talk undisturbed for an hour or so?"—but also well aware of its corruptions. (H. G. Wells thought George Bernard Shaw's mind had been "early corrupted by public speaking.") He believed that students like lectures, for it was, in his view, "a very commodious, passive way of learning or rather of satisfying the requirements." He also believed that students were "bored and like to be entertained, and a lecturer who knows how to display a sense of humor in relevant and irrelevant asides can be certain of approval." He knew that lectures given over and over again tend to harden into formulas and were the academic equivalent of long-running Broadway plays. Gerschenkron believed, too, that "a lecturer who thinks creatively on his feet and to whom many a new thought occurs under the stimulus of expressing himself aloud, and who, therefore, is likely to go off on all sorts of tangents, such a brilliant man is unlikely to find much favor with his listeners."

With certain rather lengthy and boring qualifications, I am inclined to agree with Alexander Gerschenkron. With the exception of certain scientific and highly scholarly papers delivered before an audience, lectures generally tend to be closer to intellectual entertainments than exercises in ratiocination. If proof of the assertion that lectures are chiefly entertainments is wanted, I would point to their increased popularity in our day. Although going to a lecture is not everyone's notion of a real night on the town, lecturers with fame or a reputation for brilliant talk are in great demand and are often paid fees not much below those earned by show-business personalities and concert performers.

When I was a student at the University of Chicago, I once went to hear Nelson Algren deliver a lecture, the proceeds from which were to go to the *Chicago Review*, the university's little magazine on which I was a subeditor. I remember not a word of Algren's lecture—it was more in the nature of a talk—but I do recall clearly his introductory remarks. "For a thousand dollars," he said, "I will give a talk in a tuxedo. For five hundred I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

will wear a business suit. For two-fifty, I appear in a sport jacket, slacks, and necktie. One hundred dollars gets you a jacket and slacks but no tie. I'll let you guess what I am being paid tonight." Algren was wearing a pair of baggy washpants, none too clean, and a shiny shirt, which must even then have been fifteen years old, with a zipper running diagonally across it. This was Algren's characteristically delicate way of saying he was speaking for nothing.

Were he alive today, Nelson Algren might have to pep up his wardrobe; he might even have to buy a set of tails. Big bucks are to be had by those people whom the English describe as "namey." On the current chat market it is said that the highest fees are made by Alexander Haig and Henry Kissinger, who can get between $15,000 and $20,000 for a lecture. The Jefferson Lecture, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, pays $10,000. I imagine William F. Buckley, Jr., and John Kenneth Galbraith to be in the $5,000 to $7,500 class. The columnist George Will is said to charge $5,000 for a lecture in Washington, D.C., and $10,000 for a lecture outside Washington—a man, Mr. Will, clearly, who prefers not to pack his jammies. The economist Arthur Laffer, he of the Laffer Curve , asks $8,000. Imagine what he could do if he had a slider!

As for the chit for my own chat, it varies wildly, depending on the location (California in the winter is always tempting), the state of my own finances, the cause (if any). I find it is lovely to be invited to give a lecture, and hell to accept. I get especially edgy when, in connection with an invitation, the word *honorarium* is mentioned; I have come to read the word *honorarium* as a synonym for "small fee"; when someone mentions "a modest honorarium," I know the fee is likely to be in the category known as "negligible." I was not long ago invited to give a lecture at Princeton for a fee of $800. I wrote back to say thank you, but since I am a nervous lecturer I generally try to get two or three times what I am worth, and, because you are offering me only roughly what I am worth, I must refuse. This past spring I received a call to give a commencement address; the terms were expenses, a modest honorarium, and, of course, they would "toss in an honorary degree." I had not thought of the phrases "toss in" and "honorary degree" in conjunction before. "Toss in the rear-window defogger," yes, "toss in the white wall tires," no problem, but to have an honorary degree "tossed in" seemed to me a marked advance of some sort.

I wouldn't say that it is the main attraction, but one always goes to a lecture anticipating little foul-ups, gaucheries, comic faux pas. As a form of "live" entertainment, lectures in the natural course of events often provide these. In this line once, when giving a classroom lecture on F. Scott Fitzgerald, I described the young Zelda Sayre, not yet Fitzgerald's wife, as the "ball" of Montgomery when of course I meant the "belle." Somerset Maugham, whose stammer made each of his lectures and speeches an act of bravery, in a speech at Yale during World War II referred to "the price of liberty" and then could not for the life of him remember what the price of liberty was. John Berryman, a drinking man, used fairly frequently to give lectures and poetry readings at which he thought he was perfectly charming when it was clear to everyone in the audience that he was perfectly drunk. Stories are not uncommon of older professors simply delivering a lecture to the wrong class, or the wrong lecture to the right class. In the long lore of lecturing, has any lecturer, I wonder, ever put himself to sleep with his own lecture and had to be gently awakened at the lectern?

My own favorite lecture story is about an Englishman who was delivering a public lecture about George Eliot, when in the middle of the audience he noticed a beautiful young woman raptly attending to his every word. He began to direct his lecture to her alone; as he went on he felt rather like a Spanish caballero serenading his lovely senorita. On and on he talked about George Eliot, and her eyes, shining with what seemed like great intelligence, never for a moment left his. At the end of the lecture there was applause, followed by the announcement that the lecturer would be pleased to answer any questions from the audience. The beautiful young woman raised her hand. The lecturer, anticipating a question of brilliant perception, called on her straightaway. In a husky voice, with a German accent, she said, "Zis Middlemarch, may I esk you, vat elze he write?" The lecturer's answer, quite properly, is not recorded.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dialectical Immaterialism

FREDERICK CREWS

IF WE ASK OURSELVES which doctrine, since the time of the French Revolution, has proved most consequential for the reshaping of human existence, only one answer is conceivable: it is Marxism. The much-noted decline of that doctrine's appeal in recent decades is equally beyond doubt, as is the principal cause: Marxism retains its hold on the imagination only where it has not yet been put into effect. As Marxist movements have seized power across the world, fundamentally altering both civic and private life and shedding unprecedented quantities of blood, well-informed people who suffer under non-Communist regimes have found it steadily harder to believe in the Marxist promise. For the most part, only disaffected Western intellectuals appear capable of maintaining the faith, and even they are now largely demoralized.

Though it is precisely "intellectual Marxism" that will concern us here, a nonacademic reader might wonder if the phenomenon is still sufficiently common to be worth examining. France, for example, which had been the seedbed of the subtlest and most passionate Marxist thought since the forties, has turned with a vengeance toward an anti-Marxist mood. By 1979 Vincent Descombes could write of a "complete disappearance [of philosophical Marxism] from the French scene." Germany has its Jürgen Habermas, but by now Habermas has made so many compromises with non-Marxist sociology that it is hard to say just what is Marxist about his thought. As for England, no one can read the recent polemics of E. P. Thompson (*The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*, 1978) and Perry Anderson (*In the Tracks of Historical Materialism*, 1984) without gathering that a terminal exasperation with vanguard Marxism lies at hand. And according to Martin Jay in his monumental *Marxism and Totality* (1984), a book I will draw upon at length, the American "generation of 1968" has largely lost its initial enthusiasm for the Marxist vision. Another sympathetic and knowledgeable observer, Walter L. Adamson, flatly declares in *Marx and the Disillusionment of Marxism* that "Marxism as a political ideology is dead."

FREDERICK CREWS, professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley, is the author of *Out of My System, The Sins of the Fathers, The Pooh Perplex,* and other books. An amplified version of this essay will appear, along with other recent writings, in *Skeptical Engagements,* to be published by Oxford University Press in 1986.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Yet when we turn to the Anglo-American academy and take note of prevailing approaches to cultural study, we find a completely different picture—in Herbert Lindenberger's words, a "general resurgence of Marxist thought during the last two decades." In part this revival has consisted of explicit methodological theorizing, whereby principles of historical materialism are recommended for essential understanding of movements and works of art. Such theory, as we will see in a representative example, has adapted itself to an "advanced" philosophical climate and is now considered subtle and profound by many academic readers, who tend on the whole to be less demanding than modern Marxist intellectuals themselves have been.

Further, influential departments in several fields of study have begun to practice what I will call Left Eclecticism, a welcoming of many styles of anti-establishment analysis—not just orthodox Marxist but also structuralist, deconstructionist, feminist, gay, Lacanian, Foucauldian, and assorted combinations of these. The essence of Left Eclecticism is an understanding, ultimately borrowed from the Marxist ethos, that analytic and theoretic discourse is to be judged primarily by the evident radicalism of its stance. The schools of thought thus favored make sharply divergent claims, yet all of them set themselves against allegedly repressive Western institutions and practices. In dealing with a given painting, novel, or piece of architecture, especially one dating from the capitalist era, they do not aim primarily at showing the work's inherent character or governing idea. The goal is rather to subdue the work through aggressive demystification—for example, by positing its socio-economic determinants and ideological implications, scanning it for any encouraging signs of subversion, and then judging the result against an ideal of total freedom. That, in essence, is the Marxist path. Thus we could say that the adversary Marxist animus, which long predated the other schools that make up Left Eclecticism, has perpetuated itself within them.

On one level it is easy enough to guess why academic Marxism has been flourishing. Thanks to the "post-Vietnam" sentiment that continues to flood the universities and is now the conventional wisdom of the younger professoriate, academics have felt reluctant to question too closely any program that appears to "side with the people"; and though Marxism itself may be tainted by its record, Marxists have always known how to borrow energy and legitimacy from movements fresher than their own. But if we want to understand "methodological Marxism" more critically—to see why it takes the form that it does and how seriously its claims deserve to be regarded—we need to situate it both philosophically and, as it were, emotionally within the evolution of Marxist thought. To do so will require some disorienting leaps between very

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

general reflections, biography, and a necessarily sketchy introduction to Marxist academicism. My aim will not be to prove anything but rather to propose a framework for making sense of discourse that most uninitiated readers would otherwise find impenetrable.

Marxism, I will argue, has been beset from the beginning by unfruitful and intractable contradictions, and its modern adherents have felt obliged to keep diluting and occluding their claims in response to objections and untoward events. The result is that the doctrine has arrived in the universities by political default yet, through the very process of forced etherealization, has acquired a labyrinthine quality that suits a certain academic cast of mind. At the same time, the political inertness of "methodological" Marxism virtually guarantees that its vogue will be short-lived. To comprehend this phenomenon in relation to its antecedents, then, is also necessarily to begin speculating about its probable aftermath.

II

The first thing to be understood about Marxism as a total system is that, in order to inspire passionate belief, it does not have to be even approximately correct in its assertions about the world. This is because Marxism constitutes the supreme example of what Michael Polanyi defined in *Personal Knowledge* as a *dynamo-objective coupling*—that is, a quasi-religious doctrine purporting to be at once scientifically accurate and morally urgent. In Polanyi's words, "Alleged scientific assertions, which are accepted as such because they satisfy moral passions, will excite these passions further, and thus lend increased convincing power to the scientific affirmations in question—and so on, indefinitely." That no coherent intellectual link can be established between the moral and scientific kinds of appeal is awkward for Marxist philosophers but ideal for survival of the doctrine. Any refutation of its scientific pretensions can be parried with a moral thrust: "Yes, but we cannot turn our backs on the exploited masses." And any debunking of the moral record can be checked through further recourse to science: "Yes, but we are dealing with impersonal laws of history here." Such doubleness enhances Marxism's ability to weather unpropitious decades, busying itself with analytic niceties and internal housekeeping, and then to emerge with fresh zeal when the international Left is once again visibly on the march. Thus a Marxist intellectual can grant nearly every defect in his tradition and yet cling to it tenuously for its apparent wholeness as a *Weltanschauung*.

The negative side of this picture is that Marxism, precisely because it is emotionally resistant to disconfirmation, can never shake itself free of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the wishful thinking that vitiated Marx's own ingenious feats of analysis. We know, of course, that every one of Marx's major prophecies—the spread of the northern European model of production throughout the world, the progressive immiseration and radicalization of the proletariat, the decline of nationalism and religious zeal as potent historical factors, the inability of capitalism to swerve from a suicidal course, the aptitude of Communism for improving upon market mechanisms for efficient production and distribution of goods, and the gradual disappearance of the state in collectivist societies—has by now been confuted. What is less well appreciated, at least by modern Marxists, is that such unsuccess was virtually guaranteed by Marx's insistence on regarding history in morally polarized terms—a tendency that time and disappointment have done nothing to diminish within his movement.

Simply to say that Marxism has had trouble characterizing the world with adequate objectivity, however, is to miss the theory's own impact on that world. Marx's historical determinism both overlooked *and abetted* the freedom of Left dictators to put their ideology and their whims into immediate and momentous action, quite without regard for "means of production" or "evolution of class consciousness." By propagating a "scientific" eschatological romance—the destined final victory of the proletariat—Marx saddled his movement with an enduring bloody-mindedness about the relation of means to ends. Since history was headed toward the promised goal, custodians of the revolutionary state could conceive of their task as the helpful clearing away of human impediments ("class enemies"). In addition, the idea of bringing about not only distributive justice but also a correct form of consciousness that must be manifested by all survivors of the revolution has opened the citizen's mind as well as his conduct to inspection, punishment, and reconstruction.

Judging from the course of Marxist controversy, one suspects that it is too much to expect of Left theorists that they will purge Marx's claims of such incitements to savagery. Those theorists who have seriously tried to do so—for example, Max Horkheimer, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Lucio Colletti—have ended by renouncing Marxism itself, for they came to see that Marx's Manichean annihilationism was not an accidental by-product of his "science" but rather was its very engine. But the loyal Marxist is precisely someone who identifies *himself* with an ordained class of people to whom "history" has granted extra liberties, and thus he will be unlikely to recognize that the theory is undemocratic and mischievous in its essence. Instead, he will appease his conscience by blaming "the capitalists" for thwarting history's wishes and goading the international Left into regrettable overreactions.

It is important to recognize, however, that the Western Marxist

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tradition has had its own version of intellectual scrupulousness, consisting of efforts to render the doctrine better able to withstand historical surprises. If, for example, a proletarian revolution—the very centerpiece of Marxism as originally conceived—now appears chimerical, Marxists will feel compelled to cast about for a new "proletariat" (blacks, women, indigenous tribes) or to relocate the revolutionary principle in a domain that will be less accessible to prying doubters—for example, in the persecuted but irrepressible libido. Such was the influential direction chosen by Herbert Marcuse. Again, if Marxist theory is shown to be internally contradictory, a theorist can riposte by calling logic itself into question, stigmatizing the compulsory, nondialectical choice between exclusive alternatives as an instrument of the abominated ruling class. And similarly, if a theorist finds himself on the brink of admitting that his doctrine is flatly contrary to available evidence, as a last resort he can even deny that "evidence" and "truth" are epistemologically applicable notions. This in brief is how Marxism has come to be entangled, through Habermas and others, with the hermeneutic school of philosophy.

It would be a gross simplification, however, to depict the Marxist tradition as proceeding in a straight line from Marx's epistemological assurance to such a fragile state. As we will now observe in narrowing our focus to two quintessentially representative Western Marxists, the emotional commitments that require "Marxism"—whatever it is—to survive the theorist's exercises in recrimination and autocritique impart a pendulum-like motion to Left debate. If one theorist gives us a "humanist" Marxism, another, detecting a suspiciously bourgeois flavor in such a concoction, will be sure to declare it inauthentic and call instead for a dry "scientific" Marxism, one that restores the seeming vigor of dialectical materialism. And both parties will be able to cite Marx himself as their ally, for Marx's career passed from one extreme to the other and was rich in ambiguities at every period. It is only when the potential Marxes have been actualized—when there is little further to be said in the quarrel between Marxist humanism and Marxist scientism, and both traditions appear equally futile—that theorists feel tempted to retain their doctrine at the extreme price of dropping its reference to a solid world. The only setting in which such a ghostly Marxism can flourish is the academy, a kind of heaven for concepts that have slipped their earthly moorings.

III

If Western Marxism can be identified as the tradition of theory that attempts to make adjustments between Marx's vision and the actual course of history, then the paradigmatic Western Marxist was unques-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tionably the Hungarian Georg Lukács. In *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), Lukács made a fatefully ingenious attempt to abolish, through metaphysical prestidigitation, the newly apparent chasm between Marx's historical laws and the triumph of Bolshevism. Lukács realized that Lenin had achieved his spectacular results through opportunistic feats of will that were nowhere anticipated in *Capital*—feats that appeared in fact to refute the mature Marx's necessitarian outlook. Moreover, in the years when *History and Class Consciousness* was being composed, the model of government by workers' soviets, to which Lukács, among other Marxist intellectuals, was passionately committed, was rapidly giving way to a brutal centralism. In these awkward circumstances, Lukács's way of trying to be constructive was to accord the newly omnipotent Party a philosophical warrant for its caretaker role. To do so without a sense of self-betrayal, he felt compelled to invoke as his explanatory framework the quasi-mystical Hegelian voluntarism that Marx himself had largely outgrown.

In this anti-scientific and utopian perspective, history was neither a sum of discrete events nor the operation through time of impersonal laws, but rather a process of self-realization, a coming-to-consciousness of a collective subject. Lukács identified that subject with just one class, the proletariat, which had been "objectified" through the capitalist fetishizing of social relations ("reification") but which would eventually arrive at full self-awareness. Such an awakening would not so much accompany the worldwide revolution as constitute it, and that revolution in turn would *be* history in its "totality"—that is, its complete realization. Meanwhile, since even in Russia large segments of the actual working class were far from understanding or desiring the completion of history, the proletariat's consciousness would have to be prompted and its agency temporarily supplanted by a knowing vanguard—the Communist party. The Party was to be a trustee for the proletariat while the latter was learning to deserve its destiny.

The enormous influence of this argument is not easy for an outsider to fathom. In the first place, Lukács's contentions about history and the proletariat were patent illusions. As Walter Adamson asks in *Marx and the Disillusionment of Marxism*, "How could it ever have been supposed that the proletariat was history's creator-subject when it has appeared only in the past one hundred years? How has Lukács, himself no proletarian, managed to gain knowledge of 'proletarian knowledge'? Or is Lukács's proletariat merely his personal fantasy, an abstract negation of the reified world?" More ominously, we can now see that the tutelary role that Lukács granted the Communist party, not without agonized misgivings, amounted to a philosophical blank check for any future deeds the Party might see fit to perpetuate.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The biographical aftermath of *History and Class Consciousness* is itself an important element in Lukács's legacy. Aided by the Comintern, which had no use for Hegelian speculators and which denounced his book as "idealist," Lukács himself realized that his argument had been cosmetic. Stalin's accession to power and withdrawal into the ruthlessly anti-revolutionary policy of "socialism in one country" brought Lukács to a crossroads. Instead of indulging in further messianic daydreams about the proletariat, he would simply have to choose between the Party and his ideals. Lukács picked the former and lived out a long career that was literally and spiritually "in the East," offering to his fellow Marxists in the West the spectacle of a gifted and cultivated thinker trying to stomach the literary bureaucrats' "socialist realism" and applauding Soviet power plays, only drawing the line at the invasion and reconquest of his own native Hungary in 1956.

Lukács, then, lent impetus to Western Marxism not only by reintroducing the Hegelian-idealist dimension but also by becoming in his own person a cautionary example. Clearly, new ways had to be found to shield Marxist theory not only against disconfirmation but also against the power of Communist parties to compel obedience from the theorists themselves. It was inevitable that Lukács would find an opposite number—someone who would stand the Lukácsian system on its head and call the result a purer Marxism, though in fact he was furthering Lukács's own work of hedging Marx's claims. This person proved to be the leading French structuralist Marxist, Louis Althusser, who doubly merits our attention because he happens to have decisively influenced present-day academic Marxist theory in England and America.

In the 1960s Althusser devised an exceptionally elaborate doctrine that was intended to rebuke both the independent Marxist humanists (Lukács, Gramsci, Korsch, Sartre) and the orthodox champions of "economism" (Engels, Plekhanov, Kautsky, Stalin) for having succumbed to the temptation of "expressive totality"—the idea that all social, economic, and political features under a given dispensation reflect a single controlling principle. Althusser insisted that ideology and political conduct, for example, could develop somewhat independently of one another and that the social formation as a whole therefore deserved to be understood piecemeal, according to the specific "nonsynchronous" structures that make it up. Those structures, though deeply related, were not the properties of individual subjects or of a Hegelian metasubject; on the contrary, "subjects" were virtual fictions constituted *by* structures and were therefore not to be considered primary historical agents.

In developing this emphasis Althusser had several aims in mind.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

First, he sought to explain Stalinism without discrediting Marxism itself. That is, Stalin's misdeeds, now that Khrushchev's revelations had made them notorious, could be treated as atavisms from an earlier stage of development—as "capitalist" or even "feudalist" crimes. That was a convenient (though hypocritical) vantage for continuing to assert the virtues of socialist man. Second, Althusser wanted to establish a degree of autonomy for theory itself. As an unwavering member of the French Communist party, which still retained the Zhdanovite mentality that had recently obliged French intellectuals to align their thought with Stalin's Lysenkoism, Althusser hoped to persuade Party leaders that the loyal intellectual should be left free to work out the deep implications of Marxist laws. Third, Althusser wanted to use that freedom to reground Marxism in a rigorous, scientifically precise understanding of Marx's most important texts, which he taught his followers to read in a proto-structuralist (nonsubjective and non-"expressive") spirit.

When Althusser invoked science, we must understand, he had in mind nothing so potentially unwieldy as inductivist empiricism. His conception echoed that of his teacher Gaston Bachelard, who had maintained that science is constituted precisely by its break with experience and that scientific concepts thus live out a life of their own, dictated by an internal logic. This view, far from uncommon in France, enabled Althusser to claim that a given science—dialectical materialism, for example—could be judged only by criteria already contained in its own theoretical discourses. Thus liberated from empirical scruples, he went on to draw extravagant parallels between the structure of ideology and that of the personal unconscious as it had been described by his sometime psychoanalyst and fellow anti-empiricist, Jacques Lacan. Indeed, he modeled his briefly famous "return to Marx" on Lacan's Saussurean "return to Freud," which purported to strip psychoanalysis of all bourgeois accommodationist elements while lending the most radical (and debatable) Freudian concepts a previously undreamt-of linguistic construction. In short, Althusser's alleged science of purified Marxism became an amalgam of unverifiable notions from modish sources.

From our standpoint here, as we look ahead to a purely academic Marxism, the other crucial aspect of Althusser's doctrine was the high value it placed on theory itself. In Marxism generally, theory had always been tolerated as a necessary device for exposing the underlying nature and operation of capitalism; but theory was ultimately esteemed for its effects on practice, not for its own sake, and under classlessness it would be wholly subsumed within the communal organization of life. Althusser, however, laid emphasis on the permanent need for ideological propositions as a means of generating social consent. Thus he not only pleaded

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for the relative autonomy of present-day theory but also envisioned the "scientific" theorist—the only truly knowing member of the polity—as retaining a cardinal role under Communism. Indeed, he saw fit to designate theory making as a mode of production in its own right, and he implicitly accorded paramount status to that mode in the revolutionary state. What product, after all, could be more essential than social consent?

Althusser's many troubles, however, began with this very claim. Lukács, we recall, had replaced the authority of the proletariat with that of the Party—a dangerous exchange, but one that fitted nicely with brute realities. But here was Althusser implying that the best proxy for the ever-lagging proletariat was none other than the Marxist intellectual—in a word, himself. Fellow Marxists hotly charged Althusser not just with egocentrism but with the graver error of having merely inverted vulgar Marxism by collapsing the material base into the cultural superstructure. The charge was sufficiently plausible to force Althusser into making a craven "self-criticism" of his "theoreticist deviation." Class struggle, he now claimed to have realized, was after all a privileged referent, not just another signifier; in fact, it was the ultimate yardstick for gauging the correctness of theory.

What really doomed Althusser, however, was not his abortive heresies and unseemly apologies but a misfortune to which Marxist theorists are chronically susceptible. Precisely because they announce universal laws with evanescent political aims in mind, their whole system of thought can be made to look ridiculous by a sudden turn of events. Althusser was emboldened to attack the humanist line of de-Stalinization because it was already under attack from Mao Zedong, whose Cultural Revolution seemed to pose an attractively democratic alternative to the Soviet model of industrial development at any cost in suffering. When the Paris students took to the streets in 1968, many of them had both Mao and Althusser in mind. But Althusser hadn't had *them* in mind, and their scorn for the "conservative" Communist party and their defiance of its discipline mortified him. His subsequent silence led some of them (most notably Régis Debray) to denounce him from the Left and others (the *nouveaux philosophes*) to turn sharply against Communism in its entirety—as Debray himself eventually did.

By the end of the sixties scarcely anyone, including the ungrateful Party, was left to share Althusser's peculiar ideological niche. And in the seventies the word began to leak out that Mao's Cultural Revolution had been an orgy of irrational persecution and a momentous setback for Chinese social development. In the whole Communist world, no viable model remained for Althusser's pedantically fundamentalist yet fanciful

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"return to Marx." Well before he tragically lost his reason in 1980, Althusser's philosophy had become an embarrassment throughout the Western Left.

To a connoisseur of internecine Marxist disputation, Lukács and Althusser represent opposite ends of a spectrum that runs between "humanistic" and "scientific" extremes. Yet such a contrast is not finally very impressive. Lukács's humanism consisted in his invoking an early Hegelian Marx so as to make conceptual and ethical room for the Soviet Communist party, which even in 1923 was not noted for its humanistic bent; and Althusser's scientism was enlisted in a comparably gratuitous effort to find in Marx's writings an irrefutable basis for a scheme of analysis that was pseudoscientific at best. Both thinkers were involved in the same grim comedy of trying to justify theory itself—really, to justify a loyal-but-independent intellectual class—in the eyes of a Communist party that demanded conformity pure and simple. From a non- or anti-Communist perspective, the one truly significant difference between Lukács and Althusser would appear to be that the latter, forty years further into the age of Left bureaucracy and terror, felt more at home with essentially static structures and apparatuses than with means of progressive change.

IV

If, as we are told, Western Marxism is now in general retreat, we might expect the Marxist theorizing that finds its way into the Anglo-American academy to be a humble and tentative affair. Among the more conscientious radical professoriat, that is indeed the case. The atmosphere of Left Eclecticism, however, constitutes a temptation to wanton posturing. Under that dispensation, and more particularly in the absence of the passé assumption that theories are supposed to account for data more parsimoniously and cogently than their rivals, a Marxist academic need only skirt the classic dilemmas of his tradition—making sure, however, to identify his claims as avant-garde in provenance and affinity—to gain a place at the banquet table of radical pan-theoreticism.

Surprisingly, moreover, the confinement of Marxism within a methodological context turns out to be the perfect tonic for a doctrine whose combined implausibility and apocalyptic ferocity were earning it such a bad name in the larger world. In America at least, Marxism as a mere "hermeneutic" takes on a conservative function that everyone tacitly recognizes. Instead of being an incitement to insurrection, it is now just one of the work stations in the assembly line that produces articles, books, degrees, and promotions, thus ensuring the Marxist theorist's own continued livelihood and repute. And precisely because the meth-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

odological Marxist can be considered harmless, he can choose to reassert the heedless, inspiring utopianism that mortifies more troubled spokesmen of the Left.

To see such born-again yet anemic Marxism at close range and to grasp its place in the new academic order, let me turn now to my own field, literary study, and focus on a single manifesto that is often cited as a powerful overview and methodological guide: *The Political Unconscious: Narrative As a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981). There can be little doubt that its author, Fredric Jameson, is the most eminent Marxist literary theorist alive. After a cautious start in summarizing and explaining other Marxists' and structuralists' ideas (*Marxism and Form*, 1971, and *The Prison-House of Language*, 1972), Jameson, who has taught on three University of California campuses and at Yale and who now holds a chair at Duke, made his greatest impact with *The Political Unconscious*, which one knowledgeable observer, Dominick LaCapra, has dubbed "a *summa marxologica* for our time." Jameson is considered so weighty that, among other honors, in 1982 a special issue of the methodologically rarefied journal *Diacritics* addressed the import of his thought; and one admirer, William C. Dowling, has devoted a whole book, *Jameson, Althusser, Marx* (1984), to unraveling the mysteries of *The Political Unconscious*.

The reason for all this acclaim cannot be found in the originality of Jameson's thought. As Dowling recognizes, the main idea behind *The Political Unconscious* "had been outlined by Terry Eagleton some five years before," and the book "turns to productive and, often, pyrotechnical use the systems of such thinkers as A. J. Greimas, Northrop Frye, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Claude Lévi-Strauss"—a list that could be considerably lengthened. Above all, Jameson's whole interpretive framework—most obviously the neo-Lacanian idea of unconscious ideology and the invocation of "structural causality" to reconcile Marxist and post-Marxist perspectives—is largely borrowed from the Althusser who had not yet been induced by the Party to confess his ideological sins.

From a Marxist standpoint Jameson has nothing to add to Eagleton's *Criticism and Ideology* (1976), a book whose argument foundered in the Althusserian maelstrom of jumbled determinism and autonomy. Tonally, however, Jameson leaves his rival far behind. In the first place, he has mastered the Parisian manner of stating the most high-handed claims as if they were self-evident. Yet at the same time, his ceremonious prose reassures us that we are reading a fellow academic, someone who is preoccupied by complexities that will require the most exquisite adjudication. Unlike Eagleton, then, Jameson does not incur the risk of being too easily comprehended. As Dowling would have us acknowledge, for Jameson "the plain style is the limpid style of bourgeois ideology where

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

there is no need for obscurity because all truths are known in advance. . . . A genuinely Marxist style, then, will be one that produces what Jameson calls . . . 'dialectical shock.' . . . As Jameson also says, a dialectical style is one that makes you hear the shifting of the world's gears as you read."

Because his radical stance is only rhetorical, Jameson can wave aside all the misgivings that have nagged at Western Marxism from Lukács through Habermas. I gather that he adheres to Althusser not because he feels trapped in the same box as his hero—the Soviet tyranny and the intellectually backward Communist parties seem very distant from his mind—but because he regards Althusser as having forged the most appealing link between Marxism and the other strains of thought that he wishes to appropriate. Thus Jameson combines his own already eclectic Althusserianism with a full-blown Hegelian expressive causality—the very tendency that Althusser did his best to keep at arm's length. The "universal science" of Marxism has revealed to Jameson that history (or, on occasion, "History") bears a simple meaning: the nightmarish yet ultimately triumphant "collective struggle to wrest a realm of Freedom from a realm of Necessity." This meaning then becomes the unwobbling pivot of an otherwise rickety system of interpretation.

Like Marx, Jameson thinks that the realm of Freedom can be found not only in the future but also in the remote prehistoric past, into which he can apparently gaze without hindrance. What he finds there is a sensuous paradise from which we have "fallen" into our present "increasingly dessicated [*sic*] and repressive reality," but to which we will somehow return. In the prelapsarian dawn of the race, Jameson tells us, people lived in such ideal social harmony, without division of labor or distinction between old and young, that they did not even perceive themselves as individuals; in fact, they *weren't* individuals but participants in an unself-conscious oneness with nature. Their senses were exquisitely vivid yet undifferentiated—so that, for example, they were blessedly incapable of the modern "abstraction and rationalization which strips the experience of the concrete of such attributes as color, spatial depth, texture, and the like." Of course they felt no need to indulge in painting or other such protocapitalist arts. As for sex, that too was communal and devoid of stress; the male and female nonindividuals intermingled joyously without kinky repressed desires, possessiveness, or institutional complications.

Although only Marxists, according to Jameson, can fully grasp this blinding vision of plenitude, he asserts that it has been unconsciously intuited throughout the development of capitalism; it is in fact the chief repressed content of all capitalist art. Never mind whose "political unconscious" has been doing the actual psychic work of repressing;

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jameson does not pause over such banal questions. The essential methodological point is that, in advance of reading any given narrative, he knows approximately what will be its most significant content—or, in many cases, its anti-content. The heart of the text will always be in some sense the Ur-meaning of History that cannot be directly manifested under capitalist false consciousness.

When no evidence for this ultimate expressive referent turns up, Jameson is more convinced than ever of its ubiquitousness as a repressed Althusserian "structural cause." Thus no possibility remains of his *not* reaching Marxist findings in every act of analysis. This is why he can coolly declare, as if he were remarking that tomorrow will be Thursday, that Marxism constitutes "something like an ultimate *semantic* precondition for the intelligibility of literary and cultural texts." Quite simply, the Jamesonian Marxist perspective is "the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation." In fact, Jameson tells us that, since Marxist doctrine and final historical meaning are the same thing and since all non-Marxist critics have repressed that fact, every school of interpretation *except* his own is ideological in character.

As Jameson frankly states, he means to "rewrite" each examined novel or play as an allegory of its alleged determinants and of the "modes of production" that he will purport to find sedimented within its "archaic structures of alienation." There is a revealing precedent for such allegory, and Jameson cordially associates himself with it. This is the method that the medieval Fathers of the Church devised for, as he puts it, "rewriting the Jewish textual and cultural heritage in a form usable for Gentiles." Jameson is convinced that we could hardly improve upon this expedient for sweeping aside hermeneutic obstacles to a totalizing faith. Much of *The Political Unconscious* is therefore openly devoted to articulating a modern version of the fourfold patristic method of imperious Christianization, with just one major change: Marxist "History" now stands in Christ's anagogical place as the ultimate sacred referent.

Jameson, then, is such a dogmatist that the entire trajectory of empiricism from Bacon until now would appear to have passed him by. Yet there is obviously something else going on here. If our theorist really expected the rest of the literary academy to lay down its arms and join his allegorical crusade, not even the latitudinarian ethos of Left Eclecticism could make room for him. As Dowling keeps observing appreciatively, however, beneath his surface bluster Jameson is an accommodationist—a "politic" master of the discreet "sidestep" and "flanking maneuver" who "treads lightly" whenever his readers' sensibilities might be wounded by forthrightness. Jameson's mission is not to revolutionize but to reconcile by means of a unique *pax Jamesoniana*. To critics of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whatever advanced persuasion and to Marxists who are still troubled by the perennial tug-of-war between base and superstructure, he brings a comforting message: we can all get along if we do so on my terms.

As Dowling explains, Jameson's project is to steer "a middle course" between vulgar-Marxist reduction on the one hand and structuralist-poststructuralist decentering on the other. For Jameson, however, a middle course entails ecumenically incorporating extremes rather than avoiding them. His strategy, in Dowling's words, is "to swallow up the enterprises of Derrida, Foucault, et al. by showing that they are incomplete without a theory of history that only Marxism can provide. . . ." Such a "completing" of the anti-transcendental poststructuralist program is in actuality a flagrant negation of it. But we are not dealing with logic here—only with priestlike gestures of inclusion.

The Jamesonian interpretive process follows a two-stage recipe whereby potentially antagonistic methods of reduction are made to cooperate serially. First the critic sets about the business of a post-structuralist, catabolizing the superficially intentional-looking literary artifact; then he recycles the denatured remains for Marxist ends. Stage one, Jameson says, finds "its privileged content in rifts and discontinuities within the work, and ultimately in a conception of the former 'work of art' as a heterogeneous and (to use the most dramatic recent slogan) a schizophrenic text." Thus the author, that potential trouble-maker who thought he knew what he was doing, is safely bumped aside. Then comes the culminating Marxist stage, which consists of the critic's "rewriting of the literary text in such a way that the latter may be seen as the rewriting or restructuration of a prior historical or ideological *subtext*"—namely, some variant on the usual homily about History.

Stated so baldly, the process sounds like a job of mugging, but in practice Jameson impregnates it with mystery and drama. He does so by ascribing to the text itself the tensions, rumblings, and convulsions of "wondrous dialectical transfer" whose all too mundane source is his own apparatus for scrambling literature and then retotalizing it on more congenial terms. Rather than just lie there inertly between its covers, the Jamesonian novel or play, somewhat like History itself, keeps suffering electric "moments" and "movements" in which it is seized first by a desire to repress its own latent content—to "demonstrate the impossibility of such representation"—and then by a contrary desire to "tilt . . . powerfully into the underside or *impensé* or *non-dit*, in short, into the very political unconscious." In this performative critical discourse, each successive literary work is required, as it were, to try its hand at a Fredric Jameson impersonation, first "doing" his Gallic deconstructive voice and then his Teutonic Hegelian one.

In an earlier phase of academic history—say, three decades ago—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jameson's grandiose system would have struck nearly everyone as an eccentric curiosity, a Spruce Goose of theory that succeeds only in occupying inordinate hangar space. Sympathetic contemporary readers, however, understand that Jameson is not really trying and failing to account for commonly recognized features of literature and history. Rather, he is staking out the interpretive liberties he intends to exercise as he jostles with other contenders for Left-Eclectic turf. Thus no one takes offense when he announces that "everything is 'in the last analysis' political," that his own politics are the only thinkable kind, and that he intends to "liberate . . . us from the empirical object . . ."—that is, from the ideologically unsanitized work of literature itself. Other beneficiaries of Left Eclecticism aim to accomplish comparable feats of liberation through the practice of their own interpretive rules.

Ironically, then, the people who are best situated to register the speciousness of Jameson's system are not his fellow professors but rather those remaining Marxists who care about addressing the shortcomings of their moral and intellectual tradition. They know what Jameson chooses to conceal, that the Althusserian scaffolding of his theory had already collapsed well before he patched it back together to impress the gullible belletrists. And insofar as Marxists are troubled, as many are, by the bloody record of Left regimes, they can only take offense at Jameson's studied concentration on our prehistoric communist past and our blissful Communist future. In Dominick LaCapra's words, "The pathos of utopianism in blindingly eschatological form may be understandable coming from members of a destitute and desperate underclass; it is suspect when it emanates from intellectuals as a kind of strained, high-altitude messianism."

By placing *The Political Unconscious* alongside Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*—even the contrast in titles is suggestive—we can gauge how far Marxism has declined in certainty, clarity, and sincerity since Lukács's day. Instead of the anticipated triumph of a specific class that was alleged to be the unified subject-object of history, we now get the merest hints of a soporific Marcusean paradise for all—and no proposed means of arriving there. This is not just the difference between a work of political philosophy and one of literary theory, for Jameson, too, imagines that he is paving the way for "alliance politics" on the American Left. But such politics are extremely remote from the vaporizing of *The Political Unconscious*. The truth is that Jameson has quietly abandoned the whole Western Marxist project of trying to render Marx either more humanistic or more scientific so as to chart a better political course. Since the antinomies lying at the heart of Marxism have been found to be irreducible, Jameson chooses to resolve them through the only means yet untried, incantation.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

V

Given the atmosphere of Left Eclecticism, the illogic of *The Political Unconscious* cannot be considered a serious handicap. On other grounds, though, Jameson's school and "methodological Marxism" in general may soon find themselves *vieux jeu*. With *The Political Unconscious*, Jameson has completed the Althusserian transfer of focus from allegedly progressive historical forces to the theorist's private capacity to hold intricate structures in his mind—a mind that in Jameson's case has become dubiously fetishized as a collective world-psyche. Comparable feats of projection have long been tolerated in the academy, but not within its Left component. It seems inevitable that advocates of younger and less metaphysically encumbered "isms," particularly those that are tied to one-issue social movements, will find less and less to admire in such narcissistic Marxism.

Even among those Left academics who prefer analysis to solidarity, the Marxist tradition may already be in grave trouble. Few potential recruits are now eager to be associated either with its blemished utopian ingredients or with the increasingly devious sophistries that are required to spare them from dismissal. Thus the same impatience that overwhelmed French Althusserian Marxism in the seventies may now be ready to strike down its American academic counterpart. One need not be very observant, for example, to notice the beginnings of an exodus from the camp of Marx to that of the late Michel Foucault, who is also the clear favorite of a new academic generation that cares little for the tortuous history of Marxist apologetics.

It is a nice question, however, whether Foucauldian analysis arose in order to thwart Marxism or, rather, to save its debunking spirit from its doomed propositional content. Foucault himself, significantly, began as a Marxist and a student of Althusser's; they were both Party members in the dreary Lysenko period and thus, unavoidably, were both questing to free Left discourse from Zhdanovite supervision. Certainly Foucault's ideological wariness—"to imagine another system," he once declared, "is to extend our participation in the present system"—bespeaks a widely shared wish to flee from the scene of the Marxist-utopian debacle. Yet the ever-shifting, self-ironic, and brilliantly original style of analysis that Foucault eventually developed can also be regarded in part as a solipsistic Nietzschean travesty of Marxism.

According to Foucault, power is all-pervasive, "knowledge" is its malleable servant, and "reality" is sheer discourse, organized differently in each era according to *epistemes* or paradigms that are presumed to dictate the very structure of perception and mentation. (Foucault never explained how he himself had managed to slip out from under such

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

determinism.) The idea of a succession, within capitalist Europe, of discrete and increasingly sinister *epistemes* allowed Foucault to exercise the Marxists' own appetite for antagonistic explanation without the awkwardness of having to identifiy a specific class of exploiters, to say how they had learned the means of manipulating our minds for their unstated purposes, or to engage in risky predictions about a better future.

Again, Foucault retained the Marxist privileging of the Left intelligentsia's unique insight, but by declining to call that insight veridical he endeared himself to people who could no longer swallow Althusser's scientific pretensions, much less Lukács's personification of truth in the proletariat-to-be. Declaring that intellectual activity has nothing to do with truth—or, in a more radical moment, that such activity is "sacrificial, directed against truth"—Foucault resolved the theory-practice dilemma altogether on the side of practice. Thus, when asked whether history "really" displayed the features he claimed for it, he could deem the question moot; his purpose, he insisted, had not been to make accurate statements but merely to manifest his unstinting resistance to the entire order of things. Indeed, if he had tried to tell the truth he would have been acceding to what he considered the most insidiously tyrannical feature of that order, its demand for Cartesian objectivity. By combining such nihilism with activism—he privately worked for prison reform and gay rights—Foucault turned himself into the model anti-hegemonic leftist, one whose long-term program was immune to disappointment because, so far as anyone could tell, it did not exist.

In Foucault and his emulators, then, we witness not only a decisive turn away from Marxist expressive causality—a turn we can welcome in itself—but also an intensification of the Marxist blurring of thought and action. It was Marxism, remember, that first taught modern intellectuals to be cynical toward the notion of seeking knowledge for its own sake. From Marx's insistence on valuing ideas for their capacity to change the world, through Gramsci's belief that "mass adherence or non-adherence . . . is the real test of the rationality and historicity of modes of thinking," to Althusser's grudging avowal that philosophy is "class struggle in the field of theory" and Jameson's eager endorsement of that same dictum, Marxism has urged us to allot considerations of truth a place below our instrumental goals. Foucault merely carried that principle a step further, suggesting that the most purehearted leftist is the one who remains totally unaccountable either to truth or to the Left itself. In Foucault, perhaps, we are looking at the Marxist to end all Marxists.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dark Preface

PETER MAKUCK

The blind—
They're barely noticed
Unless, as today, I see one
Nearly hit by a car; he freezes, then moves again,
A kind of sleep stumble, following some secret
Footage in the skull. His cane whispers
Through leaves on the walk—whispers
I follow at a distance, almost afraid
Of the eyepits, the face tilted back,
As if searching
For something gone from the sky.
He shuffles past deafening rock and the blankness
Of frat house windows.
On a dark street, I watch him disappear
Into a darkened house
And wait for the light

Yellow as forsythia
That borders my father's back porch
Where my deaf cousin and his signing friends,
Are waiting for beer.
I pause at the door.
Delight creases their cheeks.
Words fill the eyes. The hands
Ballet; fingers fold and open, circle,
Figure the air and make it mean
Something funny this time. They laugh
A laughter so pure, you're listening
To nothing but light.

✪ PETER MAKUCK, editor of *Tar River Poetry*, is the author of *Breaking and Entering*, a collection of stories, and *Where We Live*, a book of poems. His work has recently appeared in the *Yale Review* and the *Southern Review*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What I Learned About German Jews

RUTH GAY

A RETURNING TRAVELER IS THE TARGET of a great deal of information. Once back on his native ground, he finds himself being instructed by friends and acquaintances on what he saw while he was away and what he must have or should have thought about it. Scholars, in particular, are itinerants by profession, and their friends are braced to match the tales of outlandish corners of the world where an unexplored tribe or plant or archive will reward a year's work. Having recently returned from a year in Germany where I had been studying German Jewish history, I was not prepared for the sharp intake of breath and the rather stiff acknowledgment that greeted my account of my stay. I very rapidly found myself the recipient of some strongly worded communiqués from my American Jewish friends about German Jews and Germany. Always, very close to the surface, lay the consciousness of the extermination camps, unavoidably and inevitably paired with thoughts about Germany and German Jews.

What my stay in Germany elicited were anecdotes, observations, and even admonishing lectures, all on the same theme and all delivered with a vehemence that indicated long-standing, pent-up feelings that suddenly had an occasion for release. What was surprising and dismaying to me was the universal hostility to that German Jewish past in general and to German Jews in particular. What also lurked in the background of these conversations was an uneasiness on the part of my friends that I would willingly go to Germany for an extended stay, that I would even admit to having German friends, or that I could praise what I had seen and enjoyed.

Three extended examples may illustrate the themes expressed sometimes more briefly, although no less strongly, by others. My first encounter was with a woman sociologist who had been invited to a conference in Germany on teaching the Holocaust in the schools. She was Jewish, had never been to Germany, and was married to a German Jew who had left Germany in 1939 as a child of thirteen. Although her

RUTH GAY's essays have appeared in *Commentary*, *Dialogue*, *Horizon*, and other magazines.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

husband had never wanted to go back, he had, in fact, returned reluctantly for two brief visits for professional reasons. The prospect of visiting Germany was profoundly disturbing to the sociologist, and her husband was adamant in refusing to accompany her. Yet it was an important opportunity for her, so she decided to accept. Her stay in Germany began with her arrival at the giant Frankfurt airport. Here, she noted with some emphasis, everyone was extremely nice to her, helping her make the complicated connections to the train that would take her to her conference. The drama, or rather the self-dramatization, began on that train.

"The minute it started to move," she said, "all I could think of was Auschwitz, and I felt that I was in a cattle car." This is a response that many of those who were upset by my account would find perfectly understandable as expressing some solidarity with the past. And yet it seemed to me that there was something extravagant, intrusive, and even ultimately tasteless about it. She was arrogating to herself a place in history where she had not been.

As the sociologist took the trouble to emphasize, everyone had been "very nice," which perhaps only confused or disappointed her expectation that everyone would be beastly. As she herself reflected on the matter, she could not fit in her experience in the airport, just as she could not accept the actuality of the modern, comfortable passenger train, with her knowledge of what had happened to Jews under Hitler. She was quite deliberately not responding to the world around her but to a world that existed nearly half a century ago.

This high pitch of feeling was sustained through the conference, confirmed by meetings with various German colleagues, and not dispelled even during an excursion to visit some of the baroque churches in the neighborhood. Even the sound of the language, which she did not understand, distressed her. Through it all, she said, she could only think that she was in the land of murderers.

There is a problem with this response, I find, not because the emotion is not genuine or understandable, but because of how much it shuts out. Perhaps, also, it is too easy. There is nothing difficult about hating Nazism, being horrified at its toll of murdered human beings and mangled lives. But there is more to Germany and to the German Jewish past than Nazism. Perhaps it is the unthinking nature of the response that is so troubling, because what is on display is the narrator rather than the events, and her emotion reflects less her own experience than the relived experience of others.

How to respond to Germany becomes more complicated and much more problematic when we consider the feelings of those who lived in Europe during the Nazi years and who then try to decide, against a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

background of real experience, whether or not to return. There is, again, the question of language. For those Europeans who only heard German when it was spoken by the occupying troops of Hitler's army or by Nazi guards and killers in concentration camps, the mere sound of the language, even after four decades, can only evoke a thrill of horror. Even many of those for whom German was their mother tongue refused to speak it when they left Germany. For them it was tainted and stood in the way of their making a new start. Students in the Western world stopped studying it for decades, not only because it was the language of the enemy, but even more because it was the language of what was seen as a blood-stained people. Yet for those who continued to speak it in emigration, it was, after all, *their* language, bound up with lives that had started long before the camps, the prisons, the Nazi brutality. Through it they expressed all the most elemental and powerful emotions of human life. They had heard Nazi roars in that language, but they had also heard their mother's voice, their lover's, their children's. In short, they had lived their lives with it. It was home. For many Americans whose only experience of German is via the movies, which all too often depict the harsh gutturals of Nazi fiends, it is hard even to imagine that endearments can be spoken in the same language.

The pattern, then, for travelers like my sociologist friend is a strong expression of horror at the Nazi past, a fastidious distaste for contemporary Germany combined with an extremely critical attitude toward the former German Jewish community. The free-floating emotions of hatred and outrage at the Germans very quickly spill over to the German Jews, who are perceived as having wanted too much for themselves and not enough for their East European co-religionists, toward whom they have been unfailingly described as "arrogant."

The consequence of these feelings for many American Jews is that they will not visit Germany, buy German products, patronize German firms, or, if they do visit, they will revel in the expected and subsequently experienced emotions. And finally, if they happen upon one of the surviving Jewish communities, they feel no compunction about reproaching the members for continuing to live in a land that holds such memories. As a witness to many such encounters, I have often wondered why people so untouched by the war, who have lived all their lives in a cocoon of safety and plenty, feel that they have some moral right to act as the Grand Inquisitor to those who have survived real danger and have had to make, and live by, difficult choices.

In Berlin, for example, the Jewish community offices are located on the site of a former synagogue, across the street from the best hotel in town. Not a few of the visiting Jews from America stay at the hotel, and many stop in at the community center to look at the display in the main

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hall and to visit the library. Its choice collection of books has been built up since the war by an urbane and multilingual librarian, himself originally from Magdeburg, who has an adventurous and poignant history of flight—service in the British army, life in Palestine, return to Germany. . . . The visitor rarely gives the collection more than a cursory glance and then, delighted to discover that the librarian speaks English, launches into what has always seemed to me an outrageously impertinent line of questioning. "Why are you here? How could you return? How can you stand it?" The librarian, inured by now to such visitors, answers patiently, and the visitor retires gratified by his encounter (he has spoken to a *native*!) and his own unsullied principles.

What these travelers actually experience is a double loss: they are oblivious to the fascinating history of the German Jewish community, its struggle for emancipation, and its astonishing flowering. For them two thousand years of Jewish presence in Germany are reduced to a single epoch of twelve years. And while they may gloss over their hostility to the lost community, they also distance themselves from it by their profound skepticism about its way of life in the first place. The surviving synagogues, the monuments in the cemeteries testifying to the living past, and even the postwar memorials evoke only a pitying contempt.

Their second loss is their inability even to see contemporary Germany. The emotions are well in place long before their airplane touches down, and they are not likely to be affected by mere palpable reality. For them nothing is neutral. Everything is steeped in the Nazi past and their rage at this lost Jewish community.

Part of my discomfort during conversations with American Jews comes both from their antagonism to a barely apprehended German Jewish past and from the search for an emotional catharsis. The visitors want to see ruins and ashes, not kindergartens, rebuilt synagogues, or rebuilt lives. But do we not need to think about that past, in addition to responding to it?

Another encounter. Again this is with a highly educated professional woman, born in the 1930s of American Jewish parents. Our discussion was touched off when I recounted rather gaily that I had learned about the wonder-working properties of spas during my stay abroad and confided that I was considering a rejuvenating fling myself. This, she said, "alarmed," "disturbed" her. "They," she said with some dismay, "have gotten to you"—the "they" being the old German Jews whom I had met in Berlin. But the spa was only the symbol of the larger problem.

What she seemed to be saying was that the adoption by German bourgeois Jews of the habit of going to a spa, among all the other Gentile, bourgeois habits that they had adopted, was yet another sign of their

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

total abandonment of Judaism. "They thought of themselves as Germans," she said, as did others, "not Jews." By thinking this way they had betrayed their origins (presumably East European) and certainly their brethren, their suffering brethren in Eastern Europe. Everything that made them more like the Germans made them less like the East European Jews. The consequence of this increasingly marked difference was that the German Jews looked down upon the East European Jews, behaved haughtily toward them, did not help them, were ashamed of them.

The equation as she saw it was that the Germans were to the German Jews as the German Jews were to the East European Jews. In just the same way that the Germans looked down on the German Jews for being inferior, so the German Jews looked down on the East European Jews. In this way, too, the German Jews were emulating the Germans.

This charge is not permitted to stand still. It escalates. "Why didn't they protect the East European Jews?" she asks. "Why did they let the catastrophe happen?"

"What catastrophe?"

"The Holocaust."

Presumably, the argument implies, the German Jews, by not preventing Hitler from coming to power, unleashed the catastrophe that destroyed Jewry in Europe. When I questioned the historical basis of this argument, pointing out that the German Jews were, after all, Hitler's first victims, she asked again accusingly, "Why didn't they get out?" As if, by remaining, willingly or not, they had in some way endorsed Hitler's policies.

A more portentous analysis was offered at a dinner party by a Polish Jew, born in Warsaw after the war and long an American citizen. "History proves," he said, "that assimilation can only lead to anti-Semitism." The others around the table nodded in agreement at this formulation. "Non-Jews like to know who the Jews are, to see them in distinctive dress, speaking their own language, to be able to identify them. Once they begin to be assimilated, the non-Jews become uneasy. They begin to worry about plots, about the Jews taking over." When I objected that he was making a causal connection between German Jewish assimilation and the rise of Hitler, he answered, "Of course not. *I* am not making any causal connection, but history shows. . . ." I commented that the German Jews had paid dearly for their way of life, since one-third of them had perished under Hitler. But he was not to be moved. Two-thirds had been able to get away, he pointed out. They had it easy. "They had connections abroad. They were rich." He did not need to make the unspoken comparison.

What is it that was so offensive about the German Jews? The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

apparently flawless blending into a society of high culture? For the East European Jews who only rarely attained this, such success was irritating, exasperating. Although this response has now hardened into resentment, a generation ago the East European Jews were able to laugh about the figure they cut in the world. There used to be a series of stories told in Yiddish that all began with, "Two Jews went to Paris . . . ," and with those opening words, an absurd situation was signaled: a contrast of extremes. Paris, the height of refinement, luxury, wealth, sophistication . . . and the two Jews? Everyone knew them intimately. They were poor; they were unworldly; their universe was bounded by the shtetl and the commandments of their religion. The outcome had to be some fantastical revelation, disappointment, or conjunction based on these opposites. To sharpen the story a little, sometimes the two Jews go to Paris to visit that Jew of Jews, Rothschild, or they visit the Rothschild mausoleum, or they go to a brothel. The very form of these stories is an indication of how the East European Jews felt about themselves. Filled with goodness, warmth, and a native wit, they were, nonetheless, helpless in the larger world. And innocence has a charm of which no one can accuse the German Jews.

I have offered these three incidents because they represent widely held views, which are characterized most of all by their vehemence. It serves no purpose in these conversations to present contrary evidence: to talk about German Jewish *religious* life, to present German Jews as pioneers in Western Europe inventing a way for Jews to live in modern times—all of this is irrelevant. Reports on the aid provided by German Jewish organizations to East European Jews crossing Germany on their way to America bring only a cynical smile. "They just wanted to get rid of them." Even the post–World War I rediscovery of, and admiration for, East European traditions on the part of German Jews is dismissed as a form of condescension.

It is remarkable how not a single good quality is to be found in this entire, now defunct, Western community of Jews, except for the grudging acknowledgment that it seemed to have produced an exceptional number of talented people. Its critics can hardly muster any sympathy for its struggles, its suffering, or even its demise. In fact, with an ultimate heartlessness, they will say, "It served them right." What kind of bloodthirsty imagination do we have here? One hundred seventy thousand killed (one out of every three German Jews), the rest dispersed, and it is not enough to elicit even a sigh of compassion.

It will not do to attempt to unravel the logic of these arguments or to challenge their structure, for the introduction of facts does not in any way alter feelings. Here we have highly rational people, used to examining problems according to acknowledged rules of evidence, suddenly aban-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

doning every shred of their customary way of thinking. What we are hearing, then, is not reasoned language, but a cry of pain for a terrible loss. What is one's feeling, after all, upon seeing the pictures and hearing the stories of those unspeakable camps? They paralyze thought. We want to sit on the ground and cover our heads and mourn. But in the end it is not enough; we must do more. We need to remember that *two* civilizations died along with the victims in the camps. We need to throw bridges from our fortunate America to the past. Picture albums such as Roman Vishniac's on Polish Jewish life provide indelible reminders of that lost culture. But where is its German Jewish counterpart? Irving Howe's confidently titled *World of Our Fathers,* a study of East European Jewish immigrants who came to America, does not even take cognizance of those other fathers. (This view of the matter was called to my attention by Peter Gay, an American historian born in Berlin. After looking through a copy of *World of Our Fathers* when it first appeared, he closed it saying, "Not my fathers!") But German Jews are also part of Jewish history, and they are also its martyrs.

When confronted with the prospect of the International Psychoanalytic Association holding its next congress in Hamburg in 1985, even the members of the American Psychoanalytic Association, surely a profession dedicated to rational thought, do not sound very different from the speakers in the foregoing remarks. "What should be the proper attitude of an American psychoanalyst toward attending a Congress in Germany, and establishing professional and even personal contact with his German colleagues?" This question was asked by Mortimer Ostow in the Winter 1985 *Newsletter* of the Association in an article headed, "What Should Our Attitude Be?" After reporting on what he had observed during recent visits to Germany, Dr. Ostow was not ready to be prescriptive. "Since I was not a victim," he writes, "I am not in a position to forgive. Nor," he adds firmly, "can I forget." What emerges here—as in earlier cases—is that the enormity of the events unleashed by Hitler simply freezes the blood and halts every normal mode of thinking. Dr. Ostow also has no answers, but he raises a series of interesting questions about the situation, beginning with the provocative, "To whom do we owe a duty? To the victims of Nazism? To the survivors? To future generations? . . ." Ultimately, Dr. Ostow concludes, "A cost-free self-righteousness . . . is not a very helpful position." Such questions and such postulates offer at least a way into the problem that may perhaps move the questioner out of his whirlpool of feelings.

While a psychological interpretation of all these emotions might be the most fundamental way of understanding them, I would like, instead, to attempt a social explanation for the puzzling increase in hostility to German Jews just at the moment, in fact, when they are dying out. It is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

very difficult, of course, to establish causality. But if we can draw a composite portrait for the postwar generations of American Jews and consider the forces acting on them, we may be able, at least, to understand the impulses behind their feelings.

Let us take another tack. Let us grant everything. The German Jews were absorbed in mastering the situation of living as modern Jews in Germany. Their solution was to be as German as the Germans. They abandoned Yiddish, spoke German, and, except for a small group of highly trained rabbis, lost touch with traditional Jewish learning. They were embarrassed by the East European Jews. When in the 1880s large numbers of them migrated to Germany, making up nearly 20 percent of the German Jewish population by the 1920s, German Jews were dismayed by these strangers in their bizarre costumes, speaking a language that was too close to German for comfort. Living in crowded, dirty neighborhoods and not unacquainted with crime, they produced a distressing image in the eyes of the settled German Jewish population.

All this began to happen, it must be emphasized, a hundred years ago. And the irony lies in the evolution of those East European Jewish lives in Germany. Their children, too, became German Jews. There used to be a saying in Berlin that hinted at this—namely, that all Berliners came from Breslau. Some of them, in fact, came from even farther east. When we remember that the overwhelming number of American Jews are of East European origin, it is curious that one out of every five of the people that they find so objectionable came out of exactly the same villages as their own forebears. But that is perhaps only an oddity. Culture makes the man, and by the first or second generation, the erstwhile Polish or Russian Jews were just as German as their American counterparts were American.

The generation, then, that reacts so violently to the German Jews was born as Hitler came to power. They themselves had no experience of the German refugees when they first arrived in America, uprooted and bewildered, an older group than the usual immigrants. These newcomers were not about to start out in life, but had to start over again: beginners in middle age. Many of those who came in the late thirties had been stripped of their possessions by the Nazis and arrived carrying with them only the permitted ten marks in cash. In this situation, penniless and dependent, they were often the recipients of help from the immigrant aid associations of the American Jewish community. Suddenly, in a reversal of roles, the descendants of the East European Jews were sustaining the German Jews.

Yet the social and cultural gulf remained. The refugees founded their own congregations, published their own newspapers, and, where their numbers were large enough, settled in their own neighborhoods. By the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

time the American-born Jews entered college, the German refugees had managed to create a place for themselves in America. Many seemed comfortable while our young friends were still struggling. But simple envy does not explain it. Indeed, they will tell you that some of their most beloved and revered teachers were German Jews. We need to look even further back.

Until World War II, the life and language of the Jews of Eastern Europe was one of America's best-kept secrets. America has always induced a kind of willed amnesia in its immigrants, and the two and one-half million Jews who came from Eastern Europe between the 1880s and 1914 were prepared, perhaps more than others, to discard their past. Although with a spurious air of permanence they re-created their culture in this country, their institutions could not endure past the lives of their founders. Their children were not equipped to read the newspapers that they read, go to their theaters, carry on their debates. The "world of our fathers," so vividly and meticulously portrayed by Irving Howe, is gone forever. If the immigrants seemed to re-create their discarded world, it was only because they knew of no other way to live.

Those in the large cities had the comfort of dense neighborhoods where Yiddish was the language of the street, where the bakeries closed down for a week at Passover, where in their own small synagogues they had a voice in the conduct of the services and the fellowship of people like themselves. It was an easier and looser world than the one from which they had come and much more porous to the outside world, one in which compromise was taken for granted. But very little was transmittable. Neighborhoods broke up, customs went underground or were transformed, and traditional Jewish life was relegated to the few. How many Jewish children learned the counter-spell for the Evil Eye or, after Bar Mitzvah age, spent their Saturday afternoons studying a holy text? The immigrants were bewildered as they saw it all slip away, but they accepted it as uncomplainingly as they had accommodated to the strange bilingual conversations in which they spoke Yiddish and their children spoke English. All this was part of the bargain they had made in coming to America.

The immigrant generation had been, after all, in flight from more than czarist Russia and its brutality toward Jews. They also longed for freedom from the stifling confines of Jewish life as it had been shaped in Eastern Europe. They came prepared to cast their lot entirely with America. Not for them was the dream of many of the Italian or Greek immigrants of returning eventually to live out their lives as rich Americans in their native village. For Jews there was no way back, although many lived with a haunting nostalgia for their place of birth.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Yet there was a self-imposed censorship when they talked about the past. They made a secret of what their lives had really been like. So their children, born during or right after World War I, heard anecdotes about emigration, histories of family members, occasional tales about the village or town from which the parents had come. But the everyday life remained hidden because, in fact, the immigrants were ashamed of the poverty in which they had lived, the ignorance of their world, and the humiliation that had been part of that life. Very, very few of those who had suffered violence in their villages, who had experienced a full-scale pogrom, would even talk about it. Only a persistent questioner could cajole them into speech. As to its merits, they had neither the words nor the wish to make a fairy tale of their past. Or perhaps it would be better to say that they were embarrassed to reveal the sordid actuality to these god-like creatures, these Americans, their own sons and daughters. So they were silent.

Just as the parents had fled from their past and were bent on establishing themselves in the New World, so were the children equally intent on fleeing from the new ghettos that their parents had unwittingly created in America. What engaged them above all was the new universe of the secular, Gentile West, and without very much looking back, they left those fragments of East European culture that the immigrants had brought. Yet, despite their inattention, they had heard something. They had heard the language and the stories; they had been brought up within a culture, however modified in transplantation. Whatever their ambivalence toward their inheritance, that first generation had absorbed its teachings. And while they may not have believed that they, too, had stood at Sinai with Moses, they felt the weight of that long past as theirs.

Until the end of World War II, this mixture of past and future had seemed enough. Then, in those last months of the war, the pictures of the concentration camps as the American troops came upon them shocked American Jews out of their headlong flight into neutral conformity. The realization that East European Jewry was finished had consequences that the American Jewish community is still absorbing today.

Now all of this is a very long way around to placing my informants into their context. But when we consider their generation, they have a very special quality. They feel their Jewishness intensely, often a feeling that has grown stronger over the last two decades as they have been subject to an increasing barrage of information about the camps, about the ghettos under Nazi rule, about the survivors. This has served both to raise the level of anxiety and to increase the urgency for some appropriate response. In middle life these un-Jewish Jews recognize that, as members of the premier Jewish community of the Diaspora, they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have become the last carriers of Jewish tradition—an awesome responsibility.

Yet the secrecy and diffidence of the immigrant generation left its descendants ill-prepared for their burden. Very early it was clear that the transmitted Judaism that had evolved in another world could not be taken over intact, and American Jews have been groping ever since for new rituals and ceremonies to bring it into consonance with their lives. Inevitably new forms raise nagging doubts about authenticity, and here is the crux of the problem. The need for certainty has led directly to a flight into emotion. There one needs no facts, no text, no exegesis to respond with satisfying intensity.

But if American Jews were hazy about their own origins, they were even less clear about the German Jews—about whom they had inherited not many facts but some very strong feelings. Identifying with the sufferings of the East European Jews, the Americans have taken up the old quarrel with a new energy and a new passion. And as these feelings seem to emanate from that sacred center of tradition, they are also exempt from conventional modes of scrutiny and correction.

American Jews criticizing the German Jews of pre-Hitler Germany always use the word *assimilation* as a reproach. Yet the reason that their sense of outrage outruns the gravity of the charge is that they have lost the thread of what is a very old argument and are, in fact, reproducing it in a faintly remembered and distorted form. The real reproach of the East European Jews to the German Jews all through the nineteenth century was not assimilation as such but the fear of the apostasy that lay behind it. A people who have spent millennia building elaborate fences of law around apparently direct legal statements know how many barriers need to be placed in the way of possible transgression.

Joseph Roth, the brilliant novelist of Hapsburg, Austria, himself born in Galicia, explored these attitudes in "Juden auf Wanderschaft," an essay written in 1927, which was at once an analysis and a defense of East European Jewry. He wrote:

> Against the stranger and the enemy, the Jews of Eastern Europe present a united front, or an apparently united front. Nothing seeps through to the outer world of the intensity with which the various groups are locked into combat with one another, of the hatred and bitterness which the followers of wonder rabbis muster against their rivals or of the contempt that all pious Jews entertain for the children of their people who have conformed outwardly in custom and dress to their Gentile environment. The majority of the pious Jews condemn most severely the man who shaves his beard because the shaved face especially presents the clearest sign of his falling away from the faith. The shaved Jew no longer carries the signifying mark of his people. He is attempting, even if not intentionally, to appear like the fortunate Gentile whom no one persecutes and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

no one mocks. Yet even he does not escape anti-Semitism. It is the duty of the Jew not to expect the moderation of his fate from humanity but from God. Even so superficial a form of assimilation is a flight or an attempt at flight out of the tragic community of the persecuted; an attempt to level contradictions that nonetheless continue to exist.

But this symbolic level of conformity soon turns into reality. By separating himself from his community, the Jew loses his protective caul, and, without his distinguishing marks, he will simply be swallowed up in the surrounding world. While the assimilating Jew may see the Gentile world as enticing and easy, the believer sees it as a menace that lures the Jew into forgetting himself and deprives him of the hidden strength that his faith gives him. Without the symbols of his Jewishness, "there are no longer any boundaries to prevent intermixture," continues Roth, "and it is for that reason that every Jew carries his boundaries with him. It would be a great pity to give them up. Because however great the hardship, the future will bring a glorious redemption. . . . The contempt of the East European Jew for the non-believer is a thousand times greater than that which is turned against him. What is the great magnate, the head of the police, a general, a governor, against the word of God, against any one of those words that a Jew carries in his heart?"

This is the argument in its full intensity. An unshakeable conviction in their own worth and in the superiority of their people was utterly essential to the Jews of Eastern Europe, aware as they were both of the ingrained contempt of their neighbors and of the danger that this contempt might at any moment flare into violence. It was ingrained in their thinking to regard their tormentors as little better than beasts, while they saw themselves as rational men. And while the intensity survives among American Jews, the conviction that gave rise to it in the first place has been lost. A secular generation, indeed a succession of secular generations, has forgotten the origin of the passions described by Roth and mistakes the simulacrum for the reality.

We must see this anger of American Jews, then, as a kind of piety to the past, to the feelings of their forebears, about how to preserve the integrity of Jewish life. It must be said at once that these forebears had a considerable acquaintance with suffering, but not a very large acquaintance with the world. For them any change meant yielding to the Gentiles, and that brought in its inevitable train the dissolution of the Jewish people. Yet American Jews know better than anyone that adopting the language, the customs, and the values of a culture does not mean the abandonment of Judaism. Why is it that what they accept in themselves they cannot accept in others?

If one were to chart or compare American Jews and the former German Jewish community on some scale, one would have to conclude

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that Jewish consciousness was higher among German Jews. They had not yet finished their struggle for emancipation when Hitler came to power; the day-to-day anti-Semitism was more palpable than it is in the United States and far more socially acceptable. In talking to the survivors of that community, or in reading the records, one discovers that, however German the German Jews may have been in their culture, socially they lived among themselves, a community of Jewish Germans.

American Jews may be surprised to find that their view of the German Jewish community was cogently and vehemently expressed on more than one occasion by the eminent German Jewish scholar Gershom Scholem. One of these statements was made shortly after the end of World War II when he was asked to contribute to a festschrift commemorating the contributions of the Jews to German life. He refused in his characteristic way, mincing no words. "Wherever Germans have fallen into discussion with Jews in a humanistic spirit, from Wilhelm von Humboldt to [Stefan] George," Scholem wrote, "these discussions are always based on the either spoken or unspoken presumption of the surrender of the Jew, of the progressive atomization of the Jew, as one who will be dissolved into the community." He is not here talking about religious apostasy, as described by Joseph Roth. But the same repudiation of compromise, the same fear of being swallowed up, animates him. Scholem drew the consequences of his position in 1920 when he forsook Germany for Palestine.

Although Scholem held a powerfully and angrily expressed Zionist position, it was one that was shared by only a small minority of his fellow Jews. In 1920 the two thousand Zionists in Germany made up a bare one-half of 1 percent of the Jewish population, and even at their maximum in 1939, they accounted for less than 10 percent. In fact, these figures, especially in the 1920s, offer a probably inflated estimate of those who were dissatisfied with life in Germany. Many German Zionists, in fact, were accused of being "third party Zionists"—one party pays money to a second party so that a third party can go to Palestine; in this case the third party was the East European Jew.

The German Jews who stayed in Germany stayed because they had made a bet with history, and for more than a century it seemed that they were on the winning side. It is difficult to suspend hindsight in view of the catastrophe that overtook Europe, but it was a bet that until 1933 half a million Jews in Germany (among them one hundred thousand East Europeans) found reasonable. Yet since they lost, it is hard, particularly for American Jews, to imagine that this loss was not inevitable and that somewhere this talented and prosperous community was not to blame.

While American Jews look on the German Jewish past more in anger than in sorrow, it is ironical that in Germany today this same community

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is regarded practically with veneration. The result is a strikingly different portrait. The Jew has become like a long-vanished uncle in the family. He is fondly remembered by the older generation of Germans for his brilliance, his accomplishments, his irreverence, with many stories about how he was the life of the party, and how in some way he incorporated the best and highest aspirations of the family. All of his virtues are explicitly praised: his dedication to learning and culture, his civic-mindedness, his generosity, his deep philosophical thoughtfulness rooted in the noble and very long history of his side of the family.

"We had our difficulties," later generations of Germans seem to be saying, "but all in all he was a splendid figure. When will we see his like again? Of his sad and regrettable demise, of course, we all know. But let us not speak of it. That is also part of our family history, and we brood about it. Better to remember him at his debonair best.

"How did it happen, how could we have let it happen? It seems unfathomable, a time of madness when we stood by and watched. It makes us self-conscious with his children and grandchildren, all those others from his side of the family. They don't have, of course, the depth of the old man, his cultivation, his breeding. They are not as close to the family as he was. In fact, they rather keep themselves stiffly at a distance because they can't really understand how close we once were. The young ones can only think of his awful end and can hardly believe that anything good went on before.

" 'Oh, that,' other Jews say, looking at the photographs of the German Jew as an officer in World War I, or in his robes as a judge, or as a member of the executive committee of the Jewish community. And their voices harden a little. 'He stayed too long,' they say. 'He should have known better.' But whether he left early or late, that side of the family still can't forgive him for his closeness to us, for having enjoyed the good times. They can't forgive him for the way it all went to pieces. As if it were his fault. That is the question, of course. Whose fault?

"It stands there looming at the end of whatever road we take. In fact, the more hilarious the reminiscences, the more golden the picture of the past—the great houses, the brilliant company, the sheer comfort and style of it all—and the grimmer his relatives' faces become."

That is roughly the way it seems, especially to the generation of Germans now turning fifty, who were born as Hitler came to power, who are tentative, touching, often bewildered about their responsibility toward that almost unspeakable past. Except that they speak about it all the time.

Many emotions that are praiseworthy in other nations have become taboo in Germany because they awaken echoes of their frightful misuse in the Nazi period. Patriotism, pride in German accomplishments, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

German values all come under a steely glare. This postwar generation envies the fervor with which other countries can sing their national anthems at the Olympic Games and fears the consequences of this same fervor at home. To a foreigner, Germany seems to swim in a time warp. Part of beginning all over again has implied taking up life where it was broken off by the Nazis. Thus many of the attitudes toward family, work, education, manners, dress, and material goods that were current in America in the thirties strangely coexist with a world half a century later. And the Jews, too—that vanished legendary people whom many contemporary Germans have never even encountered—are part of that restoration, that restitution of Germany to itself.

As early as 1953, this sense of the unrecoverable past was expressed by Ernst Reuter, the mayor of Berlin during the Soviet blockade, when speaking on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Addressing the youth of Berlin, he tried to evoke for them the part played by the Jews in pre-Hitler Germany. Their place in the entire intellectual structure of the German people, he said, is much greater than most people know, and a great deal that is ascribed to German accomplishment can only be understood as part of that inner intertwining of Jewish and German thought. Everything, he stated categorically, "that has determined the physiognomy of our people is an expression of this homogenization [*Zusammengehörigkeit*]."

The strange attraction that Germans now feel toward Jews (an ironical obverse of the nineteenth-century Jewish attitude) was disturbingly expressed in the personals column of a prominent German newspaper in 1977. The advertisement appeared right after a rather controversial story was published in the popular magazine *Stern;* the article described, with photographs, contemporary Jewish life in Germany. "Despite the *Stern* article," the notice begins, "student 24 years old, stupidly enough pure Aryan, otherwise without defect, wishes in this way to make the acquaintance of a Jewish girl."

This is rather acrobatic in its style. But the quieter, almost offhand references to the Jew in current German literature illuminate even more vividly how the Jews as an *idea* survive in German consciousness. *Kursbuch*, an avant-garde, irreverent magazine, for example, published in June of 1983 an issue on the latest attitudes toward child raising with some rather satirical articles about slavishly devoted parents who abandon everything to their children. In describing the typical household of such a family, the author writes: "The best room on the main floor of the house is now given over to the children. The great living room in whose corner in the 1930s the grand piano of the vanished Jewish family once stood, now confronts you as a playroom. And if you visit, you can give up all hope of ever getting beyond it."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now this reference to the Jews is slipped in as an aside, yet it is meant to, and does, evoke a vivid image for everyone who reads it of just that ordered, well-to-do life, with its universally understood hierarchy of cultural values, of which the Jews are now perceived as the supreme practitioners. But it is a sentiment without sentimentality, because the writer does not neglect to remind us that the Jewish family of the thirties "vanished." And this is the hard knot at the center of these references.

One of the preoccupations of contemporary Germany is that of coming to terms with the Nazi past. For decades it was surrounded by silence, but now this problem is out in the open, and the Jews, and the Jewish part of that past, are constantly on view. In 1984 on Good Friday, a nationally broadcast church service included a talk by a Jewish woman philosopher. The Berlin Museum has opened a Jewish section; there is an institute for the study of anti-Semitism at the Technical University in Berlin, and there is a rising generation of young German scholars in the field of Jewish studies.

But there is a widespread feeling among intellectuals and academics that the life of the mind would be a lot more interesting, would have a certain verve that Germans find lacking in themselves, if there were some Jews around. Now this view also stirs nodes of discomfort among the few remaining Jews, as it falls short of that blind egalitarianism that has been their democratic ideal for two centuries. Although the flattery is difficult to resist, it arouses a warning prickle among sensitive Jews who are made no less uncomfortable by a favorable generalization than by an unfavorable one.

American Jews are not the only ones to question the existence of the postwar Jewish community in Germany. "Why do they stay?" asks the former German Jew, now an Israeli, who is visiting colleagues in Berlin. But he does not deny, in telling his own story, the skepticism with which he and his fellow immigrants were first regarded in Palestine. And indeed the refugees were not averse to a few satirical strokes about themselves. There is a whole repertoire of stories that chart the arrival of these formal, bourgeois types in the rough and ready Palestine of the thirties. One of the rather derogatory East European terms for German Jews—*yekke*—has a popular etymology that explains it as coming from the German word for jacket—*Jacke*—which the German immigrants insisted on wearing despite the subtropical climate of the country. A favorite Israeli anecdote tells of the immigrant ship, standing in the harbor at Haifa, that tips over when someone on shore calls "Herr Doktor" and all the passengers rush to one side. This joke and many others poke fun at the immigrants' politeness and propriety, suddenly out of place in a pioneering society. But there is at least one story where the German refugee strikes back. He is on the beach at Tel Aviv and sees

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

someone thrashing about in the water and shouting in Hebrew. "What is he saying?" he asks a neighbor. "He's calling for help," says the neighbor. "He's drowning." "Ah," says the *yekke*, "he was one of those who studied Hebrew. Swimming is what he should have studied!"

Incomprehensible though the Jewish presence in Germany today may be to both Israelis and American Jews, the newcomers have formed a stable community of some thirty thousand souls, settled mainly in Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, and Frankfurt. But very few of these are German Jews. There are a few hundred who came back from Chile and other Latin American countries when the regimes there began to seem threatening. There are more who survived the war in Germany by hiding or having false papers. A handful returned from America. But mostly the Jews in Germany today are concentration camp survivors who stayed on and their children who were born after the war. In the last ten years several thousand Soviet Jews have joined the community, and in Hamburg there is a settlement of Iranian Jews who came after 1948. Germany is not an obvious place for Jews to settle, but they all have their reasons. Although they are not inconsiderable in number, there is little communal sense and little propulsive force about them. They see themselves ironically, wistfully, tragically, as the mood strikes them, as a vanishing community playing at most an ornamental role in German society. One sociologist has even speculated that their very presence helps to expiate the German sense of guilt. The atomization of which Scholem spoke has come about, and apart from ties to Israel, there is little to hold them together. The dreams and hopes of the pre-war German Jewish community are as alien to most of the Jews now living on German soil as they are to their American counterparts. Who will mourn for those former "German citizens of the Jewish faith"? Who will cherish their memory?

Whether American Jews will ever be able to see this segment of the Jewish past as it deserves remains to be seen. Now that the old generations are gone, we have two romances to take the place of the two living, active quarreling civilizations that once played such an important role in Europe: German-speaking Jewry and East European Jewry. Different as they were in life, they have remained equally distinct in death, and the bouquets placed on their graves by well-wishers tell us something about the fantasies that the next generation has woven about them.

As for the German Jews: over the years a number of collective biographies celebrating refugee intellectuals in the United States have been published and received with interest. There is even a certain appreciation for Weimar culture, and for a time, Kurt Weill's operas enjoyed an almost cult-like popularity. But the struggles of the Jewish

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

community in Germany to create a modern Judaism, to live as modern men, and the passions generated by such aims have been all but extinguished. The history of that world is by no means lost, but it has become a fossil, a subject for research that in Germany, at least, is faithfully pursued by a handful of Gentile scholars. Perhaps in its demise the famous German Jewish symbiosis has at last found its final apotheosis.

Reunion

PATRICIA HOOPER

This must be the place
none of us planned on
the place we were going
when the doors to our lockers
slammed the last time
and we took off waving
in Chevies and Plymouths
straight into summer
and graduation
the streets of the town
blurring and morning
arriving like years
on our crumpled dresses
the walls of our houses
gleaming and children
born to us riding
away in their cars
fading and leaving us
facing each other
here where it seems
we've nearly
come back to
our lives

✪ PATRICIA HOOPER received the Poetry Society of America's 1984 Norma Farber First Book Award for her book *Other Lives*. Her poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *Ohio Review*, *Chicago Review*, and other journals.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Portrait of a Young Physician

HOWARD F. STEIN

I HAVE KNOWN DOCTOR DAVID KERN—as I shall call him here—for eight years. We first met when he was a third-year medical student doing an eight-week rotation on the family medicine service at a large midwestern medical center, where I was one of his behavioral science preceptors. I lost touch with him during the next couple of years until he began his family medicine internship. As his teacher and supervisor, I worked closely with him while he did his residency training at a community-based clinic located in the midst of the midwestern wheat, cattle, and oil belt. Upon completion of his residency, he took a two-year moratorium from the long, unpredictable hours of office and hospital practice, working instead a predictable eight-hour shift at a rural community hospital emergency room. During this breather, he was able to pay back the enormous debts he had incurred during medical school, set aside some money to build the practice of his dreams, and reacquaint himself with his wife and two children from whom he had been virtually absent. During the past year he and Jerry Moravek, his closest friend in medical school and companion in residency training, set up a partnership in Shaklee, a farming town of eight thousand in north-central Oklahoma. Though I see him but a few times a year now—mostly at medical conferences and during the Christmas holidays—we remain close friends. This is the story of his odyssey through medical education into the world of practice.

II

Now thirty-two, David Kern is the eldest of four children of a German Lutheran business family from Kansas. While in medical school he met

HOWARD F. STEIN, a medical anthropologist, teaches in the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Oklahoma City. He is editor of the *Journal of Psychoanalytic Anthropology*, and author of *The Psychodynamics of Medical Practice*, to be published by the University of California Press, *Context and Dynamics in Clinical Knowledge*, co-authored with Maurice Apprey, and *Psychoanthropology of American Culture*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and married Charlotte Hamilton, a schoolteacher who attended the Lutheran church where he was a regular parishioner. They had their first child, Paul, while David was an intern, and their second child, Karen, during his third year of residency. Hoping now to be settled at last, they are expecting their third child. David trained in what everyone in Oklahoma calls "the city." Both he and his wife had grown up in rural midwestern towns, and after David's residency, they wanted to return to what they hoped and expected to be the more secure, stable, and serene small-town life. The politics, pace, and excitement of even a midwestern city and medical center were something they were happy to leave behind.

Shaklee, Oklahoma, seemed idyllic. It was Jerry Moravek's hometown, so they would not be starting out as total strangers to the community. The Quail County Medical Society and the business community had earnestly courted them: "We really need primary care doctors to take care of local needs, doctors whose allegiance is to people and the practice of medicine, not to the petty politics and big bucks of medical centers." The prospect for building a thriving practice was good. Community support was enthusiastic. David had relished the challenge and routine of emergency-room (ER) medicine: "You know me, I like to treat things I can cure. I like to make things happen and see results. And when your shift is over, you're done. No beepers or phones go off in the middle of the night as in residency." Still, while he appreciated the two-year reprieve as an ER doctor, he was weary of being under so many others' microscopes. He told me: "I'm not all that unusual when it comes to physicians. Having all those medical facilities and tests available to you as an ER doc is pretty enticing. But I'm a people doctor, not just an episodic-care doctor. And even as an ER doc, you're still not your own boss. You belong to the hospital, or to the medical co-op that flies you all over the region to hospitals that need coverage. In our practice, I'll be my own man, make my own decisions, get to know patients over time, and do what I went into medicine for: to help stamp out disease."

III

Ten years ago, on David's first day of medical school, the dean of the College of Medicine addressed the students gathered at the solemn ceremony that separates the future physician from his or her private—I almost said civilian—status. He admonished them in words something like the following: "Medicine is your mistress, your greatest and deepest and most enduring love. It is to her that you owe your highest allegiance. You please her by serving her. Your life as a physician is one of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dedication to her welfare. I know we're not supposed to talk like that in the 1970s. We're liberated. It sounds too sexist and archaic. But while our technology has vastly improved since the days when I was a medical student, at its foundation, medicine remains steadfastly the same. A doctor is a human being, but a doctor is called upon to know and to do far more than most human beings. A physician is no better than other people, but a physician is not ordinary. Medicine is more than a job and profession and guild. It is a vocation in the old sense of the word: it is your life, to which everything else must be subordinated."

Three years later, David recalled to me his contemptuous dismissal of such pieties as "pure cow chip." Then still a newlywed, he viewed much of the rhetorical puffery of many of his older clinical teachers as out of touch with the wish and intention of most young medical students and residents—the wish to have a private family and social life of their own inviolably distinct from their duties of patient care. "My wife and I are not public property," he remonstrated, as if addressing the absent dean. "My wife and family and our church are more important than anything else in my life. I want to keep my private life as separate as possible from my public life as a doctor. I know that's harder to do in a small town than in a large city, but we're going to make it work. I'm going to take the best technical care of patients I can, but I'm not going to become a resentful hand-holder, a social welfare agency. Part of the problem of this country is that people aren't holding up their end of the bargain," he protested. Yet ten years after his dean's exhortation, David found the prophecy coming true despite his intentions. To have a life of his own was more easily proclaimed than safeguarded.

IV

Of all that David had endured in medical school and residency, what galled him the most was a pedagogical ritual called "pimping." Ostensibly a clinical teaching technique, it was also a thinly disguised form of torture. Many advanced medical residents and faculty physicians who might otherwise have empathized with the plight of fourth-year medical students on their clinical clerkships—interns trying to find their way around new medical services and residents eager to work like real doctors—instead did their best to catch them off guard and pillory them before their peers. Pimping consisted of an endless barrage of questions about the laboratory tests one ordered, their results and meaning; about the diagnosis, interventions, prognosis, and outcome. Its purpose was less the expressed intent of honing the young doctors' skills and knowledge than the implied intent of intimidating, deriding, exposing,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and humiliating them before juniors, peers, and superiors alike. While David felt confident in the doctor-patient relationship and in working with medical staff, he became painfully shy in groups.

"I don't like to be put on public display," David said, "for every fault and inadequacy to show, as if I'm on trial. And the purpose of pimping was to keep somebody under the gun long enough so that some flaw showed—at least to try to make him lose his cool and see him break under pressure. I suppose that the idea was to toughen upper-class medical students, interns, and residents to the realities of medicine, to teach them how to live under fire at all times. It bombards your sense of security by making you feel that you've got to have command of every imaginable fact at any time an attending [teaching physician] or advanced resident is around. It doesn't just keep you alert; it makes you kind of paranoid, for you never know when the next bombardment is going to come, or from where. Either you prove that you're an expert, or you are reduced in everybody's eyes to nothing. If they ask you a question, and you simply answer 'I don't know,' that's tantamount to admitting medical incompetence and stupidity. That style is rampant in teaching hospitals. It runs on shame and the fear of being shamed the way cars run on gasoline. So you vow 'I'll show them,' and you outfox them. A year or two later it's your turn to have revenge. I hate it, yet I still catch myself doing it when Jerry and I have a medical student out in Shaklee on preceptorship for several weeks. Pimping is supposed to build confidence, but it really just tears it down. I know that. And I know that no doctor can be perfect, I don't care what specialty or sub-specialty he's in. But when they drill you year after year that you've got to be perfect, 'or else,' then you make the ones you're teaching feel as desperate about perfection as you were made to feel. It's a vicious cycle." David truly wishes to extricate himself from this cycle, but is unable to. Despising his own imperfection and nagging uncertainties, he aspires to mold those younger than himself to be the doctor he strives for but fears he could never quite be.

V

David's mother stalks his practice like a ghostly presence that can be neither appeased nor exorcised. A sickly and chronically unhappy woman throughout David's childhood, she ran an immaculate household, but one afloat on a sea of despair. What she could not know of happiness she replaced with a religiosity of cleanliness and order. The grief he could not comprehend he could also not assuage. Aspiring to make her happy where his father and physicians over the years had failed, he unwittingly brought to his medical practice the feeling of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

necessity that he be helpful, together with an undercurrent of futility against which he recoiled even more. He cloaked his urgency in an easygoing if not aloof demeanor and a confidence that something could be done—if he only knew what it was. He had a difficult time saying no to patients' demands for his time and advice, whether in the office, the hospital, church, or the supermarket.

"What right have I," he often asked aloud, "to think of myself? I'm a doctor, and a doctor is supposed to make himself available to people who need him. Yet I don't want to be on call every day of my life. Why can't patients respect my need for some privacy, some time with my own family. I go to church for the same reason they do. Isn't there somewhere I don't have to be a doctor? It's as if they think I'm their property, not really a person in my own right. They ask things of doctors they wouldn't dream of asking anyone else. Who would you call up at 3:00 A.M. just to say that your kid has been crying for a half hour? Still, they need somebody. And I remember those times when our babies did something new like crying nonstop, and we wondered whether something terrible was going on. We've been thinking of getting a separate phone at home and giving the number to only our closest relatives and friends, not to patients, so that when we're off, we don't answer the business phone. But then," he said with exasperation, "somebody will notice that we're home and come to the door with his problem. My nurse and receptionists are told to screen calls, yet somehow many that aren't supposed to get through still do. Do anything for yourself and you're accused of being selfish, of just wanting to be a rich doctor."

A kindly, self-effacing man rarely given to baring his soul, he occasionally vents his frustration to me about patients with whom he attempts numerous tests, physical exams, and explanations of his advice, but still they fail to comply or improve. At such moments his lexicon waxes with epithets that, at least momentarily, rid him of his feeling of failure: albatross, gomer, troll, crock, and piss-poor protoplasm are among the most colorful. Patients' unrealistic demands and expectations both drive him on to become a better physician and paralyze him at the same time. It is when he unwittingly blurs and merges the roles of dutiful son with thoughtful, competent physician that he becomes depressed—if not occasionally resentful and vindictive. For those patients whom he accepts into his care—he at least hopes to be able to limit his practice to paying or insured patients—his devotion is inexhaustible, as is his perpetual oscillation between self-blame and self-vindication. His wish for a life separate from his practice is undermined by a haunting family compact with the past that he does not even realize he made. Striving to be the best doctor he can be, he finds it hard if not impossible to set limits upon his availability and dedication. Hard as he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tries, he still cannot undo the past through his many hapless patients in the present.

VI

David is more comfortable with medical facts and procedures than with conversation. He prefers to do things with his hands and eyes more than with his mouth. A man of few words, he is given more to action than to visiting with patients. Despite his midwestern-cultivated understatement and unhurried manner, he becomes impatient when he cannot act upon his keen clinical judgment and decisiveness. David invariably describes himself as "fair to middlin' " and "can't [or wouldn't] complain" to patients and colleagues alike. Restive in the presence of complainers, he always wonders whether they really want to do something about their condition once and for all. Never evasive, but formidably elusive, he keeps his privacy and distance even when engaged in the intimacy of patient care. He is folksy and given to wry wit. His demeanor is as impeccable as his necktie, which is always perfectly centered, and his lab coat, which is always fully buttoned.

"Too much talk feels like procrastination and indecision," he once candidly told me when I was his tutor in clinical communication with patients and families. Ever since I knew him as a medical student, he bristled at being called a "therapist" or "counselor." He wanted only to be known by the word *doctor*—though certainly not in its etymological sense of "teacher." He felt he had worked long and hard enough to merit that title. For him, *doctor* meant doer, intervenor, conqueror of disease, master of the unknown, solver of mysteries, expert in medical technique. Words were necessary foreplay to the business of getting down to doctoring. Nothing more suited and challenged him than the aggressive sleuthing and treatment of some "zebra"—that is, a rarely seen, difficult to diagnose disease. For him, the practice of medicine was a passionate undertaking, one he often spoke of as if it were steeped in sport and combat. Behind the naturalistic microbiology of a Pasteur, Fleming, or Koch lurked an offending menace he wished to track down and eradicate. Human biology was something of a scientific mask for an only vaguely articulated demonology. For David, neither disease nor death was entirely natural; both were enemies from a more sinister netherworld. Medical education was a long apprenticeship in learning to do battle with that world.

After a seminar I gave during his intern year on uncertainty in medical practice, he rebuked me, though with a twinkle in his eye: "Uncertainty and ambiguity are un-American." Our relationship remained like that over the years. We were good sparring partners. In a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

single, well-fired phrase, he would dismiss an entire lecture and later come back for more.

One day in clinic, David talked with me after learning that a patient of his was a drug addict. David had believed this patient's story and had prescribed narcotic drugs. He said with disgust: "In medicine, everything stands or falls with trust. The patient has got to trust you, and you've got to trust the patient. That's like getting to first base. Everything else is supposed to fall into place after you've gotten there. But you can't always know whom to trust, and sometimes you act as if you have trust when you don't. We have to act sometimes on knowing so little, not just about the disease but about the patient and our relationship with him," he said, now more sad than angry. "We want to give service, but we sure don't want to feel used, manipulated in return. I don't know what's worse, to get sued by a patient or to feel burned, a sucker, for doing what you thought was right. So then what do we do? We start to practice defensive medicine, assuming that everybody's out to get us, to try to talk us out of meds or into unnecessary surgery. You always try to keep one up on your patients. That's no good, for you get just as bad as the patients you mistrust. I guess I've just got to be more careful so that the manipulators don't take advantage of me."

Since the days of his residency, patients often mystified David and thwarted him as a healer. Ostensibly coming to the doctor to recover from what ailed them, many patients seemed to defy treatment. Many used their pains as bargaining chips with their families or their employers. Some patients came to him, declared their complaints, and, with little more explanation but plenty of expectation, deposited their bodies in David's hands with the challenge: "You're the doc, fix it," as if it were some malfunctioning automobile they could come back for, fully repaired, at the end of the day. "Some patients," he snarled early in his residency, "*dare* you to try to take their disease away. They really drive you crazy if you try to cure them. Take away one symptom, they come back at you with another one, as if they're trying to beat you at some game. I like the kind of patient who wants to get better. They're good compliers, and you don't have to worry about what tricks you've got left up your sleeve to outsmart them. Why can't we dissect every medical problem like we did in anatomy?" he asked wistfully. David found himself winning far fewer medical battles than he'd hoped, losing far more than he'd imagined, and, even worse, compromising his standards in order to make *something* work.

One day during "Grand Rounds," early in his second year as a family medicine resident, David triumphantly described the case of a frightened patient whom he had persuaded to have heart surgery and whom he accompanied through her ordeal. He said, more from relief than

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

assurance, "Finally I found a real disease I could do something about. The more you get into areas you can't do anything about, the more frustrated you get." He had long admired, as much as jeered at, a slogan often attributed to surgeons: "When in doubt, cut it out." Pensively, he continued: "I wish it were always that simple."

In his third year of medical school, David told me what he imagined the sequence of a routine patient encounter would be: "You ask the patient's presenting complaint. You then find out the patient's signs and symptoms, do a history and physical exam, get some lab tests, do a differential diagnosis that tells you what the problem is. Then you do something about it. Maybe the patient returns for a few follow-ups. But then the patient is cured. You don't see him until he gets sick the next time."

Today, settling into his own practice, he grouses, "What I'd hoped medicine to be is more the exception than the rule, and I'm not prepared to accept that. It's just not in me to be a quitter, to not put up a good fight. I can't just stand there and watch the patient go down the tubes. I've got to help to bring them back, at least to try."

I remember standing with David at the hospital bedside of an elderly dying patient, tubes coming from most orifices of her body, as David, with anguish, paged over and over again through her medical chart. He accused himself aloud: "I keep thinking there's something I'm missing. I'm the expert, right? Then why can't I figure out what's wrong and fix it? I can't just do nothing and let her die." Later, she died, and David confided his dread: "The failed cure is the failed doctor. How do you live with that? You can't miss anything, that's what they drilled into us in medical school. A real doctor keeps on top of the situation. And I'm supposed to be a real doctor." In medical school and residency, he had been rigorously trained to assess, diagnose, and treat disease, but few of his basic science or clinical teachers were comfortable counseling him on how to be with people in their suffering. Somehow, that wasn't acceptable doctoring.

David found himself becoming angry with patients who failed to respond to his efforts or who did not comply with his medical advice or prescriptions: "Why do people go to the doctor if they don't want to try to get better? They're wasting the doctor's valuable time and their own or their family's—or the taxpayer's—money. The sick role is supposed to be a temporary condition from which the patient wants to recover by going to the doctor." For David, patient care felt like the pitting of his will and intelligence and skills not only against the real adversary, the disease, but also against the willfulness of the patient as well. He talked occasionally as if patients were obstacles to his mastery of the disease—even when the patients were adhering scrupulously to his prescribed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

regimen. To his chagrin, patients often got better or worsened or died no matter what he did. He often did not know why patients improved. And he was supposed to be in charge. Often he could control neither his patients' lives nor the outcome of their illness. And if the patient did not improve, David always felt, even if he knew otherwise, that it was someone's fault—his, the patient's, the family's, the medicine's. He did not require the fear of malpractice litigation to condemn him publicly; he first privately blamed himself.

"Death," he once scowled at me during residency, "is an insult to our sense of competence. I should be able to fix it. That's how we think; that's how we're trained. I know that with your deep Freudian stuff you'll think I'm inconsistent. And I'm not playing God. I know exactly where God is—that's why we go to church. But death is such an affront. You feel so damn helpless—what's the point of being a doctor?" He was accusing himself and at the same time expecting a definitive reply from me.

Despite his religious convictions, David could not acknowledge death to be a natural, inexorable part of life. Rather, death was the result of a technical error of judgment. Patients did not simply die. To accept that would have been too great an affront to the expectations that he held of himself and that so many others held of him. If patients died, there must be a reason—a reason he had missed, or one that simply was not yet part of current medical knowledge. But at least he harbored the hope that there eventually would be a biomedical reason for everyone's death—one that would perhaps retroactively vindicate his sins of omission and commission. He hoped that he might be able to forgive himself that way. For now, he felt, "You either save a patient or lose a patient. There's really no middle ground to fudge the results."

When one of his patients died—and Quail County was home to a relatively large number of elderly people—whether the surviving family resorted to a lawsuit or not (and most did not, but instead lavished David with gratitude for his solicitude toward them as well as his care of the patient), he always felt that he was somehow inadequate, at fault, as though deep down, he had let the patient down, if not inadvertently killed him. With only his few years of residency, ER duty, and practice, David already had begun to have the disquieting sense of how little he could actually control his patients' health, even while he felt totally responsible for it—and for their lives.

VII

David always made a virtue of cheering others up. In even the worst medical circumstance, he would always look for the silver lining. "You

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

can't get depressed" was his motto. A football hero in high school and now still an ardent football fan, he would say to downcast patients and staff alike: "The game's never over until the last play. There's always a chance of winning before the final gun goes off." Priding himself on being a "team player," he also possessed something of a Lone Ranger quality. Intrepidly independent, resenting any attempt to fence him in, more solitary than even he'd admit to, he found himself struggling to believe that the medicine he had set out to practice still existed. One day during his residency, after seeing several lonely, hypochondriacal patients either with no remaining family or with the family unavailably strewn over the map, he snapped resentfully at me: "Sure I'm a 'provider,' but I can't provide everything patients demand. I can't be everybody's mother. Medicine can't be the family they don't have or maybe never had."

Now, four years later, settling in to the practice that he had hoped to enjoy for the rest of his life, he occasionally harbors doubts that he will be allowed to be the doctor he wanted to be. "If you try to be everything patients expect you to be and teachers train you to be, you just get all tied up in knots. Medical school and residency offer you a seemingly endless cafeteria line of choices. Every specialty is peddling its wares—oral medication, surgery, biofeedback, psychotherapy, family therapy, meditation, wellness—as if it's virtually the exclusive answer, and you've somehow got to know how to choose the right therapeutic modality each time.

"We're supposed to be human and superhuman, to be compassionate and dispassionate, a real person and a disciplined professional. We're supposed to have lives and families of our own while being limitlessly devoted to patient care, to earn a good living yet disavow any interest in financial reward. We're supposed to think about the whole person, the patient's family situation, culture, and poverty, and still keep up with all the latest biochemistry and microbiology. Doctors are asked to be patient pleasers, to be social policemen, to keep down medical cost, and to be staunch patient advocates. Our motto is, 'First do no harm,' but it's becoming, 'First avoid a lawsuit.' We're supposed to act as if we always know the answer, while we know that all the answers aren't in. At the same time we're asked to exercise independent clinical judgment, we're expected to serve as corporate puppets. We're supposed to be superdocs, specialists, generalists, technicians, priests, confidants, social workers, parents, equals, businessmen. We're supposed to be able to manage medical emergencies, acute and chronic illness, and disability. We're asked to remove symptoms, restore lost youthfulness, cure and prevent disease—and fix it all *now* somehow, in five-minute office visits. Every time you try to keep up with the information explosion, you only realize

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

how far behind you are. How do you put this Humpty-Dumpty together into something I can recognize by the name 'doctor'?"

VIII

The Kerns were not as happy as they had expected and hoped to be. No self-prescribed drugs, no alcohol—David detested both the aroma and the taste, no less the effect—no affairs. But Shaklee was not the antidote to the city and the medical center that they had thought it would be. The rhythm, tempo, and pattern of priorities indoctrinated in medical school persisted into residency and on into the first year of practice. There just was never enough time to get all the work done: seeing patients and families in the clinic often far after official closing time, making rounds on hospitalized patients, meeting with a growing number of hospital committees, attending medical society meetings, interrupting sleep or mealtime or leisure to answer the telephone or hurry off to the hospital. Even while quietly at home, David always had mounds of medical journals to keep up with.

Seeing patients came to be virtually the sole measure of David's self-worth, even though he insisted that it was not so and vowed that it would never be so. But he found himself absent even while at home. There was so much work to do, to finish, to get ready for. "When I was a resident," he explained to me recently, "of all those articles about the doctor-patient relationship, family communication, and culture you tried to get me to read, all I really ever bothered with was stuff published in medical 'throw aways' [medical journals that publish succinct, up-to-date summaries of the latest medical research, treatments, and medico-legal trends]. There just wasn't time to read, mull over, and interpret longer and deeper stuff. It had to be simple and brief. Otherwise, we never gave it a second thought. It was a matter of survival. Now, I still feel guilty for merely reading or taking time for myself. Only patient care constitutes real work, and *that* work is never done." Personal intimacy, too, was always difficult for David. He felt somehow safer in battling disease than resting at home. Medical work gave him a buffer and a refuge from too much closeness, whether with patients or with his family. But it only helped him to feel a little safer, not happier.

David and Charlotte had already gone through a progression of anticipated turning points after which "It's got to get better." At each turn, the expected miracle failed to manifest itself. With the third year of medical school, then internship, later residency, and finally David's own practice, they consoled and reassured one another that the future would differ radically from the present. Disappointment led only to a recalibration of the timetable, not to disillusionment with the timetable

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

itself. "Once we're settled," David and Charlotte promised each other, "we'll be able to do everything we wanted to do." Each successive "bend in the river" and "top of the next hill" altered little. But David and Charlotte still hoped, not yet despairing—as have many who have lived this way for decades—that "it" never does get better.

During David's second year of residency training, I held a seminar on medical marriage for all the faculty and resident physicians and their wives. When the topic of physicians as patients came up, Charlotte, always more outspoken than David, said with exasperation: "David's the worst person I know to try to take care of. He'll let himself go, taking care of everyone else instead. It's as if he feels he has no right to get sick. If he ever takes a day off, like for the flu, you know he's got to be just about incapacitated. And then he just quietly comes in the house, goes to our room, shuts the door, and disappears until he's feeling better; he then emerges as if from hibernation and goes back to work (laughter and head-nodding in the group). It's not that he feels above the lot of patients. He knows he can get sick like anyone else. But he feels guilty when he does anything for himself. He'll tell me, when I start to nag him about a bad cold or a sprained ankle he got playing touch football, 'There's a lot of folks out there a lot sicker than I am.' And that ends the discussion."

She continued: "He's not much different with me. A few months ago while he was at morning clinic, I woke up with this awful headache—and I don't wake up with headaches. I got scared and called David at the office. The receptionist put my call through to him while he was seeing a patient. I told him immediately that I was sorry to interrupt him, but that I just couldn't shake this headache, although I had taken a couple of aspirins and had tried to keep busy. He then gave me an angry lecture: 'I told you honey not to call me here except for emergencies. I don't have time for this. I have to care for sick people. I'm dealing with life and death here, and you call me for a headache. I'm backed up with clinic patients right now, and I've got to get over to the hospital to see a lady with brain cancer. Can't you try to deal with it yourself until I get home?' David doesn't mean to tell me off like that. He's a considerate man. It's just that, when he's a doctor, he's a million miles away from remembering he's also a husband and father. Sometimes I get afraid to tell him how I'm feeling 'cause he'd think I was just another one of those crocks he never looks forward to seeing."

Charlotte has begun to be bored with the town of Shaklee that at first had been their sanctuary. She also wonders how much of a refuge it really is. Several of her friends, themselves doctors' wives, call it Peyton Place. She is busy as a grade-school teacher and as a Sunday-school teacher at their church. But often, when she is ready to talk with her husband, David is ready to fall asleep or is already fast asleep. She

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

recounted to me how, during his residency when she was a housewife, she would spend her entire day talking to her babies, and would shake her sleeping husband in the evening just to have an adult voice to respond to—if only for a few minutes. She began to miss the more elegant restaurants, the malls, the movies—yes, all the noise she hated so much—of city life. They had talked several times about taking a weekend and going to the city, staying in a motel, leaving the two children with a baby-sitter, but they never could manage to do it. When Charlotte mentioned her isolation to one of the women in her church club, she was indignantly rebuked with the censure: "What are you complaining about? You're a rich doc's wife." She finds herself dissolving into little other than a doctor's wife, even with her double career of teacher and housewife. "People put you in your place," she said bitterly, "no matter what you do."

The same could be said for David. In rural Shaklee, with its single community hospital, he had hoped to escape the politics of the medical center where family physicians had to fight for their turf and defend it continuously against encroachment by other medical specialties. "I thought this only happened in places like New York and Seattle. But Shaklee?" he said with disbelief. "There are patients to see, plenty of work for everyone. But the political hassles go on as if there's nothing better to do. My obstetrical training in normal and complicated deliveries and C-sections was as good as anyone's. It's not as if I'm a novice. But at the hospital they're engaging in guerrilla warfare, always bringing up the bogus issue of credentials. And when it's not training, it's experience, and all along you know right well they just don't like the fact that you're not their kind of doc, even though they keep telling Jerry and me that they'd welcomed us both with open arms—but they failed to tell us about the guns they were carrying in their pockets to snipe with. When they don't question our OB [obstetrical training], they try to deny us privileges in the ICU [intensive care unit]. They're just as uneasy as they try to make us feel. All we want is a piece of the action; after all, we're the frontline physicians whom they depend on for referrals. So in throwing obstacles at our feet, they're tripping themselves—especially as HMOs, PPOs, and other pre-paid medical arrangements become national. I'll say one thing,"—he was sarcastic now—"the other docs sure keep us on our toes. You never know what curve ball they'll serve up at a Utilization Review Committee or a Quality Assurance Committee or at the Peer Review Organization."

He continued: "In Shaklee, it's not just the primary care docs against the specialists. That's just one ring of the circus. In another ring, Jerry and I found ourselves in the middle of a factional fight between, as best as I can figure it out, three physician groups in the Quail County Medical

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Society. I wouldn't have believed it: in little, laid-back Shaklee, America, where seldom is heard a discouraging word, the doctors are fighting each other like there's some imaginary Maginot Line that's worth fighting over. They want to drive some of the docs out of town, and they want to try to steal some of the docs from one group into another. Jerry and I got a little ugly with each other just a couple of months ago over the stupid issue of which other docs in town we'd agree to take calls for while they were on vacation. After we simmered down a little and talked it out, we realized that different medical groups were vying for our allegiance. I don't know," he said, heaving a sigh of exhaustion. "Maybe they're trying to chase us out of town like in the old West. It's unsettling when you're trying to settle in."

IX

I last saw David early in 1985 at a state-wide conference on the implications of new government and insurance regulations for medical practice. Like most of the participants, he reeled at the onslaught of change and felt weighted down to the point of feeling immobilized by all the new regulations. He explained: "When I started out in medical school, there was an acute doctor shortage. Now they say there's an oversupply of physicians. Patients have gone to the ER for every little thing, and doctors have kept patients hospitalized far longer than they should have. We've had it coming for years. If we can't police ourselves, somebody will lay down the law on us—and it'll be far worse than if we had done it ourselves long ago. Families and communities have got to learn to take care of their own. Medicine isn't a charity; it's a profession like any other," he insisted. "But there's going to be a lot of suffering because of these changes, especially among older folks and the poor."

David was an advocate of free enterprise. He had seen how hard his father had worked, with little family support, to make his hardware store a success. David was wary lest the advent of stringent cost-effective measures by government, insurance companies, and health corporations dictate how he should practice his craft. "I'm beginning to wonder whether we're not becoming agents of financial institutions rather than advocates of patients. I don't hear much anymore about quality of care. Just get the patients in and out of the hospital as fast as possible. I hate to think that we're treating lab results instead of patients. Then we have to resort to sleazy ways to circumvent the system in order to treat patients with the care they need—like running additional tests to find some laboratory abnormality that'll justify our keeping them in the hospital or admitting them. It's a whole new world that we're entering in the middle eighties. Less and less compassion. All we hear about at conferences is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the dollar. Instead of talking about patients, they talk about 'consumers.' Health care is supposed to be some kind of 'product,' and I'm constantly being notified of seminars and journals and books that promise to tell me how to 'market' my practice. We've got to attract patients, but I get uneasy about the big sell. How do you build trust with patients and with a community in such a hyped, contentious climate? And you're torn in several directions at once. The patient sues you if you don't diagnose right, but the government doesn't want you to do all those tests that would eliminate or confirm the diagnosis. I see more paperwork these days than I see patients. And this is supposed to be less government. It's harder and harder to walk into an exam room and try to help patients when all this other weighs on your mind. Listen to me," he chuckled, "I'm not even forty, and I'm already sounding cynical."

We walked together silently out to the conference-center parking lot, he to his beloved pickup, and I to my car. He was returning to Shaklee, and I was on my way back to the medical center in the city. Suddenly he stopped and turned to me and said: "The one thing I can't stand is the feeling of being stuck. I've always had the knack of sizing up difficult situations and figuring out what to do about them, and how to get out of them. Here I am scarcely six years a real doctor, and I sometimes get to feeling like any day they'll put me out to pasture. If the rules are changed enough, we won't even be recognizable as physicians. They'll point to us as relics, and say, 'That's what medicine used to be like.' And that'll be before my hair's even started turning gray.

"It galls me when I hear myself sounding like you!" he snickered, disgustedly turning away and looking out into the distance. "I hate to analyze things. That only makes me feel worse. But I think I've figured something out. All day long as they were talking about the newest medical plans, I couldn't get my mind off quail hunting. That's months off. Jerry and I and another doc in town—one who's still talking with us—get in my pickup, and we head west. We're on our own, and we have God's country from horizon to horizon all to ourselves. And there's nothing that gets between you and that bird. That's freedom. And that's what medicine should be like too. In medical school, I remember them saying that's what it *would* be like," he said bitterly.

He turned his head toward me, then finished the thought: "It's like I feel betrayed," he said. It was the first sound of despair I had ever heard from him.

"Where do you go from there, then?" I asked.

"Back to Shaklee," he rallied. "I've got sick folks to see."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Protection of Dust

LAURA FARGAS

I have never allowed anyone to clean my studio, not because I feared the disturbance of my work but because I have always counted on the protection of the dust.

—Picasso

Part of this year's dust is the spider
who came indoors last autumn
to spin her web. From her belly
she pulled a whole geography,
hollow forms of trapezoids and triangles
glued into the square join of two walls,
her world touching mine
at only four points.
It swung in cross-room drafts
like a suspension bridge
and she clung to it like an engineer
trusting specifications above all else.
She starved
because the cold October air
had closed my windows to the beetles,
gnats and sow bugs that in summer
wander in. Her web broke
under the weight of dust,
her shriveled body fell. And then
the slow process of becoming dust,
flaking down from line to point.
Now the spring breeze stirs her fragments.
The broom whisks against the slick pine board
and the dust flies up
incorruptible.

LAURA FARGAS is an attorney for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Her poems have appeared in the *Georgia Review*, *Poet Lore*, the *New England Journal of Medicine*, and other journals.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

All in the Family

A Psychobiography of the Adamses

PETER SHAW

IF ONE LOOKS AT PAINTINGS AND PHOTOGRAPHS of the male Adamses, their physical resemblance to one another is striking. Each was short of stature, prematurely bald, severe in expression. Equally striking was the intellectual continuity among them. Many observers have noted their similar habits of mind, most notably in the tendency to view proximate events in wide, even cosmic, historical and intellectual contexts. The family's own history and principles were transmitted—along with its habits of thought—through extensive letters, diaries, and autobiographies. On the other hand, neither biology nor the transmission of ideas can quite account for the generations-long continuities that are the special distinction of this extraordinary family. After all, a written tradition does not affect the formative years of childhood: it can only strengthen something already transmitted through upbringing.

In pursuing the traditions that were transmitted across the Adams generations, it is important to realize that success in public life—something that comes immediately to mind when the Adamses are mentioned—cannot really be counted as one of them. On the contrary, it can be argued that failure was really the Adams norm, along with depression and breakdown, both physical and mental, and that the character traits that led to these are the keys to the family's history. In *Descent from Glory: Four Generations of the John Adams Family,* Paul C. Nagel has recently told the stories of the Adams failures along with the successes. In doing so he has accumulated a chronicle of family disasters far longer and more pathological than had heretofore been apparent in histories of the family.

In what we think of as the first generation, John Adams, the son of a farmer and village church deacon, became a diplomat, and then vice-president and president of the United States. But John had two brothers who lived obscure lives right where they were born. In the next generation, John Adams's oldest son, John Quincy Adams, also went into

PETER SHAW, the author of *The Character of John Adams,* is preparing a collection of his articles on the Adams family, some of which have appeared in THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

diplomacy and became president of the United States. But his two brothers and sister, again, lived obscure and this time tortured lives. "Nabby," named after her mother, Abigail, entered into a disastrous marriage. Her husband, Colonel William Stephens Smith, had been an aide-de-camp of George Washington during the Revolution and then served as John Adams's secretary in London. After his marriage to Nabby, Colonel Smith proved to be an improvident dreamer and adventurer. He spent most of his life as a disappointed office seeker—part of the time while John Adams was president. Smith plunged his wife and children into a life of alternatingly luxurious and penurious debt that at one point landed him in prison. Meantime, along with his brothers, Smith borrowed from his Adams relatives and led them into bad investments.

John Quincy Adams's two brothers fared worse than their sister Nabby. Thomas Boylston Adams, the youngest, developed into a gambler and an alcoholic who suffered from depression. His brother Charles mismanaged the family money and drank himself to death at the age of thirty.

In contrast to his brothers, John Quincy Adams fought his tendencies to waywardness by piling repression on repression. His emblem of self-discipline was the personal diary, originally urged on him by his father. After some false starts while a boy and some breaks in the diary while a young man, John Quincy settled down to fifty years of diary keeping, not missing a day for decades at a time. By the time he was in his late twenties, John Quincy had achieved an iron control over his demeanor. When he came courting for several months at a home where there were numerous daughters, the one to whom he was about to propose and whom he would soon marry "never observed anything in Mr. Adams' conduct towards me that indicated the smallest preference."

John Quincy, the family standard-bearer in his generation, had, like his sister, married into a family of bankrupts and failures. His children grew up in a household in which their parents and grandparents (John and Abigail Adams) were repeatedly called on to take in their impecunious relatives. These relatives thus presented the children—the members of the third generation—with a spectacle of failure both as an immediate experience and as a long-standing model within the family. (In the first generation, John Adams's wife, Abigail, had a brother whose "irresponsibility, drunkenness, and deceit," as Paul Nagel puts it, made life miserable for his wife and six children.)

The third generation fell right into the negative family pattern. This time two of three sons fell into disgrace. John Adams junior, the middle brother, was expelled from Harvard College. Thereafter, he too was put in charge of and botched the family business, then drifted into depres-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sion, drink, and illness until his death in 1834 at the age of thirty-one.

George Washington Adams, the oldest, portentously named son of John Quincy Adams, also failed at practical life. It was he who added gambling to the family pattern of alcoholism and depression. In a surviving diary fragment written when he was twenty-four, he sounds like one of Edgar Allan Poe's reclusive, lost souls. George recalled learning at the age of nine about the death, possibly by poisoning, of a rural neighbor. He never forgot how the body was supposed to have swelled up, and he believed that from this story he had acquired "a singular taste for that mental excitement which calls forth the painful passions and shakes the inmost feelings: for narrations of crime, tales of terrible depravity, mysterious horror, and supernatural power." George fathered an illegitimate child, and then, forced to the wall by his parents' demand that he come live with them to straighten himself out, he apparently committed suicide.

The youngest third-generation son, Charles Francis, reacted to the ruined lives of his uncles Thomas, John, and George by arrogating to himself the responsibility for carrying forward the family's good name. Typically, he appears to have been incapable of imagining a life choice anywhere between the dissipation that he rejected and the massive self-control called for by the family. The later testimony of Charles Francis's own sons shows him to have made himself outwardly the iciest, most distant and unapproachable Adams of them all.

The fates of Charles Francis's two daughters and three sons—the fourth Adams generation—were less extreme, but followed the pattern of failure. Louisa was the eldest and a tomboy. She lived a life of haughty pride and superiority combined with self-indulgence. She had at least one breakdown as a young woman, married but lived mostly away from her husband, and until her death grew increasingly eccentric—"near insane" as her solicitous brother Henry felt compelled to say. Mary Gardner Adams, the other sister, was, as Paul Nagel remarks, "an unusual Adams" inasmuch as her life was "unexceptionable." (At the age of sixty-five, however, she succumbed to personal worries about her family and became addicted to morphine.)

Her brother, John Quincy Adams junior, was indolent, "charming," good humored, amusing. It appears that in each generation at least one son exhibited both sensitivity and charm: the drunken Charles Adams in the second generation; the suicide George Washington Adams in the third; and now John Quincy Adams junior in the fourth. He, too, got into trouble at Harvard, and with the Cambridge police as well. His version of the family depression appears to have been set off when two of his children died from diphtheria. The family had suffered its share of infant and youthful deaths from the beginning, but it was the wayward souls

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

like the ineffectual drunkard Thomas Boylston Adams and now John Quincy junior who as parents could not recover. In 1893 John Quincy junior suffered a nervous breakdown; he died shortly afterward. One of his sons became an alcoholic and died at thirty-seven.

In the first three generations, then, polar Adams types evolved, both of them governed by the same family imperatives. On the one side were self-deniers who hardly deviated from their duty to the family. On the other side were self-indulgers who seemed directly bent on disappointing family expectations. In the fourth generation both extremes could be found in each of the brothers. Brooks Adams, the youngest, lived an outwardly proper life. But he harked back to his unconventional forebears when he entangled himself in a socially unacceptable liaison with a woman. This kept him out of Boston social life until her death, at which time he was past forty. He suffered at least two breakdowns in his life and lived always at odds, intellectually and personally, with his world. Charles Francis junior, the oldest, also led an outwardly conventional life. On the other hand he admitted having "had my period of anxiety and many wakeful nights."

Along with Charles, Henry Adams and Brooks Adams struggled with their dual Adams personalities. In the family and among intimate friends, both were thoughtful and sympathetic—charming, in fact. At the same time Brooks was "singularly brusque in his manner"—a contradiction that caused his brother Charles to ask: "What explanation can be made of individual character in families?" Henry was particularly difficult in public. Inconsolable after the death of his wife, he covered over his emotions by consciously adopting the ironic personal and literary mode that has puzzled generations of scholars.

If, unlike many of their forebears, the Adams brothers of the fourth generation more or less kept themselves psychologically whole, the same was not true of those around them. "It does seem hard luck," Brooks Adams commented, "that, in a single family, both my brother Henry and I should have had wives whose minds gave way." Bad luck it certainly was, but Brooks failed to notice parallels with earlier Adams history that suggested more than chance at play. For the fact was that frequently those Adamses who labored successfully not to be wayward compensated by finding themselves spouses who were.

John Adams's wife, Abigail, fit the normal expectations of her time that women would supply the emotional and imaginative side of a marriage. (Her grandson Charles Francis Adams once speculated that she was also the source of his father's, John Quincy's, "imaginative turn.") But Abigail's son, John Quincy, took matters a step further in choosing Louisa Catherine Johnson as his wife. When he met her she was living surrounded by servants in her father's improvident London

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

household. Though an American—the daughter of a Southerner—she had an exotic air from having been brought up in France, partly in a convent.

Louisa's father went bankrupt just before her marriage. John Quincy did not back out or complain, but for the rest of her life Louisa feared his resentment. With her marriage she commenced to suffer from "mental depression," followed by "physical illness" in "a pattern that was to recur over and over again." Not the least cause of her distress was having brought a string of dependents and seekers after favors—her father among them—into the Adams household.

The dependents served as additional objects of exotic interest. After Nabby Adams had married the dashing Colonel Smith, Nabby's brother Charles married the Colonel's sister. Now, in the following generation, Louisa's younger sister became pregnant by the son of the Colonel and Nabby. This son led the life of a fictional romantic adventurer. His father involved him with South American revolutionaries, and as a result he was almost hanged by the Spanish. He married Louisa's sister promptly enough, but proceeded to become a gambler, an office seeker, and an Adams dependent like his father the Colonel. Subsequently Louisa's niece, Mary, a provocative, free-spirited girl who had been taken in by the Adamses, romanced all three of Louisa and John Quincy's sons. She was engaged to the unfortunate suicide George for a time but married John Adams junior. The couple lived off the family, and Mary was all but incapable of taking care of the first of their two daughters. (In yet another inversion, one of these daughters married the grandson of the second generation drunkard, Charles Adams.)

The third generation's self-appointed guardian of family values, Charles Francis Adams, contrived to marry a fabulously wealthy woman—yet another Abigail. She proved, however, to be another depressive. First, Charles's sons, the fourth generation, aped his marital choice. Charles Francis junior and John Quincy junior both wooed the fantastic and exciting Fanny Crowninshield, who chose the latter. After the death of Brooks's forbidden woman and his respectable marriage, his lawful wife proceeded to suffer from breakdowns. The marriage of the remaining brother, Henry Adams, also fit, in its own way, the family pattern.

Clover Hooper came from a family with a reputation for producing neurotic women, and one in which there were a number of medically certifiable depressives and suicides. Several years after her marriage to Henry, her father died, and she reacted by committing suicide. Her brother and sister both eventually committed suicide, too. Henry chose her in part, no doubt, for her caustic, iconoclastic wit—another form of the romantic unconventionality searched out by the Adams men. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

labored to maintain her sanity, but it can hardly be doubted that he was initially drawn to the madness in her. (After his wife's death, the childless Henry grew close to her nieces, nursing several of them through nervous breakdowns.)

The Adamses who achieved worldly success, then, proved to be as susceptible to the lure of the romantic as those who ended up failures. Both types, however, transmitted both sides of the family heritage. The same was true for the women. However initially warm and lively they might be, the Adams women, after marrying into the family, tended to transform themselves into virtual Roman matrons. Thus Abigail Adams started by twitting John for his stiffness and severity of manner during their courtship, but then she ended by changing psychic places with him. Early in their marriage she tried to soften the admonitions in his letters to their children; but when later separated from them herself, she proved capable of writing even more demandingly than he. The exhortatory, advisory mode that Abigail adopted with her children was perpetuated by Louisa Catherine Adams in the second generation and Abigail Brooks Adams in the third: both women joined their husbands in continuing to write letters of advice to their children long after those children had become adults.

The letters promulgated the lesson of self-control that was so taken to heart by Charles Francis Adams. Man's fate was either to triumph over his natural indolence or sink into dissipation and vice—exactly the two extremes into which the family's fate proved to divide itself. The letters also taught that, for an Adams, success was as likely as failure to lead to unhappiness. Promising little more than grief, the family prescription nevertheless continued to be passed on unchallenged from generation to generation. Thus the question posed by Adams family history is not only how a single ethos could last through four generations, but also how ideas so deleterious to those who adopted them can have maintained their authority.

In a recent book, *The Family's Construction of Reality*, the psychologist David Reiss has isolated some of the mechanisms underlying shared patterns of behavior in families and has suggested ways in which these patterns are transmitted from one family member to another as well as across generations. Reiss finds that families come to share and pass on a common "construction of reality." This is a metaphysical model or projection of how the world works: a "paradigm" of reality. Broadly speaking, the world may be conceived of as either threatening or benign, as a place that either makes sense or is in a confusing disorder, as either manipulable or intractable.

In a series of experiments, Reiss found that family groups displayed common traits in solving the various puzzles that he set before them.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Each group's relative success, furthermore, depended more on the effectiveness of its family's operative model of reality than it did on individual abilities, class, or ethnic differences. Without having to know how any given generation of Adamses would have behaved in a laboratory, one can sense how the family model dominated individuals. Thus in the third generation, George Washington Adams was looked to for superior achievement not only because he was the oldest son but also because of his superior abilities. Yet, after George's suicide, his less talented younger brother, Charles Francis, while painfully aware of his limitations, nevertheless fit himself to the family mold and went on to uphold the Adams name. The family's rising status and influence, its increased educational opportunities, its coming into wealth (in the third generation), and its growth in sophistication—none of these contributed to personal success (which may actually have been on the wane throughout the four generations) as much as faithfulness to the family model. By regarding the Adams family's ideas about itself and the world as issuing from such a model, one can begin to account for the persistence of these ideas over four generations and to trace the evolution of the family psychology over the same period.

For the Adamses, the model, in the first place and most obviously, made the family itself the central fact and idea. The family defined the terms of its members' potential conflicts with the world and arrogated to itself the final judgments of reality and ethics. The family taught that if the world was an unfriendly arena, then this was most particularly so because the world threatened the family ethic. An Adams was obliged to enter this arena to satisfy his family's demand for success, but only on the family's own high-minded terms.

These attitudes and assumptions appear as exaggerated versions of what Reiss variously terms the internal, the solipsistic, or the neurotic family. In Reiss's experiments this kind of family contrived to use the testing situation as an opportunity for enactments of the family's sustaining mystique. Especially reminiscent of the Adamses were those solipsistic families in which Reiss found that "all experience is reminiscent. Family members apprehend each event with some reference to their family history."

Moment by moment the life of an Adams had reference to the family and its history. First, both those Adamses who succeeded and those who failed measured themselves against their forebears, most especially their fathers. Second, all felt an unremitting responsibility to family history. The diary that an Adams kept, or failed to keep, had the purpose not only of inculcating discipline, but also of recording his life for future generations of Adamses. Later in life one was expected to take on the task of guarding and publishing the family papers and, through them, present-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing the family in such ways as to preserve its good reputation. One could argue that the Adamses owe their prominence above all to their papers: their careers would not stand out as they do had they not been recorded in such rich detail.

The family papers, one's additions to them, and one's guardianship of them, were central in maintaining the family model. To begin with, the act of writing represented an Adams's first earnest commitment to family values, and the filling of his diary was one of his earliest responsibilities. Throughout life the end of writing ultimately had to do with the family itself, for everything was to be saved and made a part of the family archive. But the perfect record of self that one felt bound to amass was by definition an unattainable ideal. This, too, suited the needs of the family model. On the one hand, those Adamses who were the most faithful in meeting their obligations paradoxically filled up their pages with laments over their shortcomings as diarists. On the other hand, those who failed to keep up their diaries just as surely conceived their lives in terms of the accumulating record.

Shortly before his suicide, George Washington Adams tried to reform himself—how else?—by resuming his diary. He began by lamenting his failure to meet the family obligation to succeed, which was a familiar enough note for an Adams diary. More ominous, though, was George's true violation of family imperative: his failure to continue his diary keeping for any longer than a month. An Adams's relationship to the family was measured by the extent and quality of his contribution to its archive. Thus George's drunken uncle Thomas wept for inadequacy when he read the family papers and destroyed his own. Other Adamses were in the habit of destroying their papers when they most acutely felt themselves to be failures and of destroying the papers of siblings when they threatened to disgrace the family. In this way most of George's papers, including his earlier diaries, were destroyed after his suicide by his brother Charles Francis, while from the previous generation the drunken Charles Adams's papers were similarly obliterated. The brothers of the fourth generation destroyed many papers both of their own and of other Adams family members—papers that they deemed inadequate or inappropriate for public viewing.

Every family's belief system comes under attack whenever reality diverges from it. In times of crisis the divergence is likely to become great enough to break down shared beliefs. At such points the family becomes acutely aware of having an ethos. It tends to turn away from reality and toward itself. And it may begin to replace its unspoken consensus by laying down "explicit rules." A family "scapegoat" may emerge (one thinks of the charming but outcast Adams son found in each generation). This scapegoat figure serves to divert the collective anxiety

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

felt in the crisis, thereby permitting the others to hold together.

All of these processes can be observed at the crucial turning points of Adams family history, and each of them deserves to be looked at. But the same processes can also be observed going on more or less continuously in the family history. The Adamses, in fact, might be described as having lived in perpetual crisis—partly on account of their resistance to normal alterations in the family view of the world. Despite repeated failures and breakdowns over the generations, only the family's few successes—themselves viewed ambiguously enough—were taken to confirm the viability of the prescribed model. Such selectivity of evidence indicates a poor adaptation to reality, but it served to preserve the family's unique continuity.

If it is correct to say that the Adams family was in continuous crisis, then the elaborate array of obligations imposed on its members can be seen as equivalent to the explicit rules that most families temporarily lay down only in times of crisis. These rules are by definition not identical with the family model of reality—the difference being one between conscious and unconscious constructs. With the Adamses the rules—self-denial and selflessly high ideals—posited virtually the same recalcitrant world as the family model. In this world the Adamses were expected to achieve notable but lonely triumphs. These triumphs would come at the expense of popular acclaim, but they would demonstrate that right, and the Adamses, must prevail.

If the underlying model differed in any way from these rules, it was only in positing a somewhat less tractable world. Failure in life was conceived of not only as a hazard but as a virtual inevitability. One sees this unconscious conviction reflected in the judgments of failure that Adamses routinely pronounced on themselves late in life—judgments that were rendered regardless of public and personal success.

The most famous such judgment, of course, was *The Education of Henry Adams*, an explicit, public chronicle of failure that is often mistakenly referred to as a departure from a family history of success. The same note was in fact sounded in the autobiography of President John Adams, the diaries of President John Quincy Adams, the conviction of the next son, Charles Francis, that he was an "unworthy scion," and the explicit complaints of *his* sons, the brothers of Henry Adams, that they, too, were failures. In each case the conviction of failure seized the successful Adamses just as insistently as it did the family's overt failures.

On the other hand, Henry Adams ascribed his failure not to a falling off of family genius (as much as his interpreters have liked to think that this is what he implied), but to his being given an anachronistic educational preparation for the modern world. He had been brought up according to his forebears' eighteenth-century ideals and conceptions,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he complained, and then thrust into the twentieth century. It was another way of saying that the family model of reality had proven inadequate.

Henry Adams's complaint, itself expressed indirectly, came only after four generations and some hundred and fifty years of family history. Nevertheless, it pointed to the major contradiction of the family model. On the one hand, the political world was represented as a man's proper sphere of activity, and the family's sons were called to go forth and meet the challenges of public life. On the other hand, behaving like the solipsistic families in David Reiss's laboratory, the Adamses developed and honored personalities unlikely to succeed in the world. So consistently were outside relationships referred back to the family itself, that individual members were effectively rendered unfit for social, let alone political, life. In successive generations Adamses hurled themselves into public life. Each of them displayed a positive genius for alienating the few supporters who rallied to his essentially lonely, unattractive banner. Yet, because the family regarded unpopularity as proof of having satisfied its high ideals, this outcome only served to confirm the family model of reality.

How, despite their self-imposed handicaps, did the Adamses achieve their successes? Certainly not through influence, persuasion, or authority. They consistently demonstrated a cold personal inapproachability, thereby diminishing their influence among men and ultimately contributing to their public defeats. But in drawn-out crises of the sort that tended to wear down other men, they were likely to prevail through sheer persistence. John Adams became known as the long-suffering, indestructible "Atlas of Independence" at the Continental Congress, where he served on more committees and for longer hours than any other representative. John Quincy Adams distinguished himself as secretary of state from 1817 to 1823 by taking a crushing burden of work on his shoulders (later his duties would require the efforts of an entire department). Charles Francis Adams steadily represented the often unpopular Union cause as a diplomat in London during the Civil War, never giving in, through years of social ostracism, to a British campaign of intimidation.

The other side of the implacable Adams doggedness was an inability to initiate action. And herein lay a suggestive affinity between the successful and unsuccessful sons of the family. In different ways they all were immobilized by the built-in contradictions of the family model of reality. Among the successful sons there appeared passive traits quite at odds with their commitment to the family's nominally activist, vigorous approach to life. Significantly, these traits lurked even in the character of John Quincy Adams, the family's greatest achiever.

John Quincy outstripped his brothers and sister in embracing and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

satisfying his parents' stringent demands for devotion to studies and self-control. But he troubled his mother by wearing his clothes in a "slovenly" way, something he continued to do all his life. While studying law, he set himself the tasks of keeping his diary and reading the works of Shakespeare and Gibbon. But at the same time he berated himself: "Indolence, indolence, I fear will be my ruin." (The paradox of driving oneself to prodigies of work to combat feelings of laziness is of course well known.) After Adams was defeated in 1828 for a second presidential term by Andrew Jackson, it made sense to him and everyone else that, having arrived at the age of sixty, he should retire and devote himself to writing a biography of his father. Yet he could not keep his mind on the task and leaped at the chance to return to active life as a congressman—a step down in dignity that disgusted his son, Charles Francis. As John Quincy himself had put it some time earlier, retirement left him without "*an object of pursuit*"; he felt immobilized by a "lifeless languor of indifference."

Many years later, when Henry Adams predicted that "inertia" would bring civilization to a halt, he evoked a long-standing Adams fear. John Quincy may not have used the same word, but his sons Charles Francis and John Adams junior used it for themselves, and later Henry's brother Charles junior applied it to their brother John Quincy Adams junior.

Closely related to the family inertia was a tendency toward dreamy impracticality. Charles Francis senior remarked on the "natural inclination of our family to keep the future in a mist." True to his observation, the responsible, obedient Adamses mismanaged the family assets as badly as the succession of failed younger sons who were given the job. John Quincy Adams invested unwisely in an antiquated flour mill that had been sunk into debt by one of his wife's improvident relatives. His grandson, Charles Francis junior, became the only Adams businessman (he went from an appointment as a railroad commissioner to the presidency of a railroad in which he held a large block of stock). Yet Charles eventually frittered away much of the family trust fund in the "blind folly," as he called it, of trying to make a killing through western land speculation. Charles junior ended by comparing his own "bauble chasing" to that of John Quincy Adams.

The outward self-control of the successful Adamses was accompanied by an inner conviction that theirs were essentially romantic natures. And the American South, which had brought them Louisa Catherine Adams and her family, came to symbolize this supposed element in themselves, of which languor was the symptom. John Adams had established the family pattern of repression as a reaction against what he felt to be his own dangerously uncontrollable passions. His grandson Charles Francis senior, who of all the family best understood John, felt himself to be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"impetuous and hot" beneath his unchanging exterior. He was, he wrote, not "cold or naturally grave" but "made for the South." His son Charles Francis junior, the bauble chaser, felt that "nature meant me for a Bohemian." *The Education of Henry Adams* summed up the family's sense of itself through lush accounts of Southern warmth and complexity and through a sketch of Henry's European born and raised grandmother, Louisa Catherine, whom he treated as a Southerner.

Despite the persistence of a romantic self-image and other Adams habits of mind into the fourth generation, the children of Charles Francis in that generation displayed unmistakably new characteristics as well. Charles Francis had married the daughter of a man who was possibly the wealthiest Bostonian of his day. This meant that Charles could provide his children with ease, privilege, and social position such as not even the presidency of the United States had brought the family. As a result, the fourth generation was in every way more sophisticated than the ones that came before. This could be seen in its members' behavior and views about life, politics, history, and the family.

Politics came to rank lower on the scale of permissible achievement: no longer was it necessary to represent the family through government service. The fourth generation moved easily in society. Henry at least had many friends, though the familiar Adams haughtiness hardly made him or his brothers and sisters what one could call popular figures. Finally, although this generation continued the tradition of writing justificatory articles and books about previous Adamses, it privately introduced a new skepticism about the family's heroes and their motives. The family obligations were not forsaken, but they were unmistakably altered.

The source of this alternation may well have been the one period in family history that stood out even from the Adamses' virtually perpetual state of crisis. This was the time in 1834 after John Quincy Adams's son, John Adams junior, died from alcoholism. John Quincy's son George had committed suicide in 1829, and the year before that there was another death—the wife of John Quincy's dissolute brother Charles, whose own death years earlier had, for all practical purposes, also been by suicide. Charles's death had taken place right after John Adams's loss of the presidency, so that it lent George's suicide, which took place not long after John Quincy's similar presidential defeat, the aspect of a repeating fate. In 1832 John Quincy's brother Thomas Boylston, also an alcoholic, had died. In 1834, therefore, the family was ripe for questioning the titanic demands it had always laid upon its children.

When John Adams became a grandfather, he had naturally enough treated John Quincy's children more indulgently than his own. John Quincy followed suit when he became a grandfather in the late 1820s

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and 1830s. But Charles Francis, three of whose children were born during the disturbing years between 1831 and 1835, proved to be, for an Adams, an indulgent *parent*. He softened the usual stringent requirements for success and was personally indulgent to the point of worrying that he demanded too little respect from his children. Certainly the disturbed wanderings in Europe of Charles Francis's daughter, Louisa Catherine junior, born in 1831, suggested a spoiled self-indulgence. To be sure, Charles Francis was remembered as having been a severe, distant figure, especially by his son Charles junior. Nevertheless, he had ameliorated the family tradition.

One result was the kindliness evident in Henry Adams's behavior within the family. He was positively "tender" while nursing his wife through the series of depressions that she suffered before finally committing suicide. Afterward when he compensated himself by gathering his wife's nieces about him and by attaching himself to other families, an English friend wrote that "goodness leaks and oozes out of Uncle Henry at every pore—all sorts of kindness and affection and self-sacrifice." Evidently thinking of the travails similar to his own that his brother Brooks had endured with his disturbed wife, Henry summed up the fourth generation's passive experience: "Disease, Insanity, Vice, Stupidity have ruined our lives through those on whom we depended; we have been bankrupted by our partners." In other words, where previously the disturbed partners had been the casualties of the family's peculiarities, in the fourth generation the suffering was shared by the Adamses themselves.

Henry undoubtedly meant to include in his list of debilities the death of his sister Louisa Catherine junior. She died abroad at the age of thirty-nine from lockjaw after a riding-carriage accident. The pointless unfairness of her death left the family devastated. In fact, the remaining brothers and sisters, writes Paul Nagel, "thereafter built their domestic recollections by using Louisa's tragedy in Italy as the pivot." In just such a manner, according to David Reiss, a family undergoing fundamental changes of outlook will often single out one particular loss like this one. Though the loss may not strike an objective observer as crucial, the family will thereafter organize its memories and sense of reality around it.

For the Adamses, Louisa's death seems to have produced a new cynicism. Her brothers adopted an ironically philosophical detachment both from the social world and, one may say, from life itself. Henry Adams became famous for the new attitude, which he summed up in his *Education*. The death of Louisa, he wrote there, had been for him "the last lesson." It confirmed the meaninglessness of the world, and it taught the futility of reason. Only the passive, unconscious mind (that is, one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

divorced from the active involvement in life that had been typical of the Adamses), could have so much as an inkling of the universe revealed by such an event. Along with Henry, Brooks Adams divorced himself from the naive faith in a reasonable universe that had previously sustained the family.

The fourth generation's cynicism was accompanied by a more usual form of revolt: rejection of the formality and ceremony practiced by the credulous older Adamses. Henry Adams invited a bare dozen people to his wedding, and among these only his brothers Charles and John were from the family. At the ceremony John met Henry's fiancée for the first time. Charles, the brother who did not reject the formalities, wrote that it was "no wedding at all" and that the "ceremony was like the engagement—peculiar." Henry skipped Brooks's wedding, though he said that he would have "enjoyed seeing Brooks submit to the conventionalities which he had hitherto made a business of swearing at." At the wedding breakfast Brooks astounded his wife's family by rising to announce that henceforward she would no longer go by her everyday name: she should be addressed not as "Daisy" but as "Evelyn," which no one was in the habit of calling her.

Such displays of social iconoclasm were not quite so new as the members of the fourth generation may have believed. For reasons not given, no Adamses had shown up for the wedding of John Quincy's brother, Thomas Boylston Adams. More explicably but no less strangely, John Quincy Adams was so upset about the White House marriage of his errant son John Adams junior that "he forgot about the ceremony and had to be reminded to attend." That John Quincy's distress should have taken such a form correlated with Paul Nagel's observation that much of his life was "spent in flight from the routine, the humdrum, and the conventional."

Thus, rather than having broken away from the family pattern with regard to ceremony, the fourth generation had but made conscious what previously cropped up as an unconscious attitude. As time went by, on the other hand, the members of this generation increasingly succumbed to a gravitational force that pulled them back into the oldest family practices. Their relationships, in fact, grew to be precisely ceremonial. It was true that they got over disapproving of one another's behavior. They effected warm personal reconciliations and came to express exaggerated regard for one another's brilliance. Henry began to derive his cosmic speculations from Brooks, and both Brooks and Charles came to care above all for Henry's opinion of their writings about the family. (Charles was one of the valued readers to whom Henry sent a first version of his multi-volumed *History* for criticism.) Eventually, though, they proved incapable of sustaining the informality of face-to-face meetings. Thus

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Charles sent Henry his biography of their father and then went twice to dine with him in hopes of learning what he thought of it. On neither occasion, though, could Charles bring himself to ask the question. One of Henry's nieces summed it up well when she remarked on "how queer Adamses are with each other." Uncle Henry wanted nothing so much as to have his family visit and live near him, yet he employed a manner certain to keep them at arm's length.

Chief among this generation's departures from the imperatives of the family were attempts to break away from the family itself. So common and familiar an impulse would hardly call for special analysis except for its relation to previous family history, in which such attempts to break away had been typical of the family's deviant members. Now such attempts characterized all of the members of the fourth generation save the super-conventional Mary Adams.

As in one of Reiss's examples, the Adamses of this generation expressed their distancing from the family geographically. Louisa Catherine junior shifted her life to Europe, and Henry his to Washington, while Charles Francis junior and John Quincy junior remained close to home for much of their lives. But as Paul Nagel astutely points out, all found ways of expressing their independence. John Quincy junior moved to a remote corner of the family land. Charles remained in sight of the main house but grandly looked down on it from a mansion built for him on a hill.

For the fourth generation Adamses, the family gradually went from having an absorbing negative importance to a positive one. Thus the brothers began to quarrel over the family papers, differing on how they should be preserved and who should have access to them. The papers had always stated the family principles and served as vehicles for their transmission. By coming around to an acceptance of responsibility to the papers, this generation began to effect an accommodation at once practical and symbolic with everything that the family stood for.

Charles Francis, the oldest, had been the first to make the family his subject. He retired from the railroad business to write history. For him this turned out to be the history of his native Quincy, Massachusetts, based largely on the lives and writings of his own ancestors. Late in life, in his autobiography, Charles produced the only overt, written criticism of the family by an Adams. He complained of having had a confining, unimaginative upbringing, and he managed to exaggerate the severity of his father's personality. Charles's previously published biography of his father, in contrast, held no hint of criticism; in it he remained faithful to the family.

Henry Adams also became a historian. In his usual indirect fashion he avoided Adams subjects, but his *History of the United States* (from

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1800 to 1816) proves actually to have been a covert apologia for both John and John Quincy Adams. And Henry's autobiography, *The Education of Henry Adams*, proves to have included another covert apologia, this one for Charles Francis senior.

After the deaths of his brothers, Brooks, now the last surviving male Adams of the four generations, moved into the quaint Old House in Quincy first inhabited by John and Abigail Adams. Here, before his own death, Brooks—the least pious member of the family—took over his generation's responsibilities by making arrangements for the preservation of the house and furnishings and for the safe disposition of the family papers. Like Charles, Brooks was a historian who eventually had turned to the family papers in his work. He, too, wrote about Charles Francis senior, after which he went on to write a biography of John Quincy Adams. Brooks refrained from publishing this work on account of Henry's argument that it inadvertently revealed a deplorable succumbing to the lure of politics on the part of John Quincy Adams. After Henry's death, though, Brooks attempted to distill his grandfather's genius in a long essay that also included an assessment of Henry himself.

Brooks began with a demonstration that John Quincy had been something far higher than a politician. Brooks called him an "idealistic philosopher" who had labored—unsuccessfully—to transform American society through the application of scientific principles. John Quincy was viewed as the most significant figure of the nineteenth century, and Henry Adams had inherited "the same cast of intelligence." In effect arguing that there was a unique Adams family belief system—something he elsewhere called a family "mind"—Brooks wrote: "Regarded philosophically, Henry's life is, in effect, a continuation of his grandfather's; he is part of a large intellectual movement and his life is, to a certain degree, mixed with my own."

Brooks's argument could not have been a more typical Adams production. It reached toward a synthesis of nineteenth-century American history. But the title was a parochial one—"The Heritage of Henry Adams"—reflecting the fact that the historical details once again came largely from the family papers. Reshaped by the vicissitudes of nearly two hundred years, the outlines of the Adams family's unstated beliefs shone through Brooks's writing with remarkable clarity. His implication was strong that the meaning of America was involved with the history of the Adams family. The history of the family, in turn, came down to a continuity of mind—a continuity demonstrated by Brooks's essay itself. With this piece of work, destined to be Brooks's last, the family tradition was brought to a triumphant and fitting end.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Crowded Raft

Huckleberry Finn & Its Critics

J. C. FURNAS

Credentials first: I am a Finnophile first-class. At the age of nine in a Pullman car on the way to Florida in 1915, I read *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Tom Sawyer's Comrade) and have never been the same since. The ensuing seventy years have widened my acquaintance with American literature. Yet if forced to choose only one piece of American writing to be spared from an otherwise clean-sweep annihilation, I'd never hesitate. For many that is at least an understandable choice. It is anything but original. Long since, H. L. Mencken, T. S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway, F. R. Leavis ("one of the great books of the world") have celebrated it far beyond my poor power to add or to detract. Yet if most of what is usually promulgated about that remarkable work is sound, we primitive Finnophiles are dismayingly misguided.

Late last year while having a nightcap with a college classmate of whom I see less than I'd like, I learned for the first time, though not to my surprise, that he agreed that, alone among Mark Twain's works, *Huckleberry Finn* does justice to his extraordinary talent. We got to quoting chunks of it to each other: The loafers' drowsy maunderings at the ferry landing; Pap's blast at the "govment"; Jim's contempt for the wisdom of Sollermun; the lovely passage beginning, "It was a monstrous big river down there. . . ." We further agreed that today's—and yesterday's as far back as the 1920s—accepted wisdom about the book not only misrepresents but obscures its virtues.

Maybe we were experiencing ESP. A few days later my *New York Times Book Review* proclaimed a landmark of which we had been unaware—1985 as the hundredth anniversary of the American publication of *Huckleberry Finn*. The same annus mirabilis also included the hundredth birthday of Ring Lardner and the three hundredth of Johann Sebastian Bach and George Frideric Handel. All received appropriate attention. But when the final precincts have reported, *Huckleberry Finn* will probably be a squeakily close second, at worst. The University of California Press published three new editions with various refinements. The University of Missouri Press published a twenty-five-warhead book of essays on Huck. Chicago's Goodman Theatre revived a stage version produced by the local Organic Theatre ten years ago; Huck got double publicity from that, for inevitably it revived the controversy over whether its consistent use of *nigger* makes him unacceptable. A vast musical version alleged to cost three million dollars came to Broadway. The National Geographic Society set up a *Huckleberry Finn* exhibit in Washington. It felt as though Tom Sawyer had called in a Madison Avenue PR wizard to make sure Huck got his centenary just due. Heaven knows he deserves it, heaped up and running over—but a *just* due. Too often the terms in which he is celebrated make one wonder what book the climbers on the bandwagon are talking about.

For, all too many of them, however sure they are that it is a masterpiece, cannot accept it as is—an unruly, lopsided, half-inadvertent joy too sui generis to hold still even for the label "picaresque novel." Only its brilliant

J. C. FURNAS is the author of many books, the latest of which is *Fanny Kemble*, winner of the Theatre Library Association's 1982 George Freedley Award.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

central portion carries the full range of its virtues. The first twenty-five pages are just warmed-over *Tom Sawyer*. When Pap arrives in Huck's bedroom, the magic begins and weaves gorgeous spells for more than two hundred pages. But the concluding ninety pages, though sometimes irresponsibly funny, are an exasperating reprise of Tom Sawyer-ishness that, as Stephen Leacock said and Ernest Hemingway agreed, spoils things.

That is the work under discussion. The reader is assumed to be well versed in it. The underprivileged (those who are uncertain about who Mrs. Judith Loftus was) are urged to do themselves the favor of rereading.

After some preliminary rumblings, the tone-setting opening gun of the doings came when the *New York Times Book Review* asked Norman Mailer to celebrate *Huckleberry Finn*. Most of his piece whimsically sketched its influence on American writing. But his last two paragraphs took off into what I had been flinchingly expecting—a rehash of orthodox criticism that set the keynote:

> Few works of literature can be so luminous without the presence of some majestic symbol. . . . We are presented with the best river ever to flow through a novel . . . larger than a character, the river is a manifest presence, a demiurge to support the man and the boy, a deity to betray them, feed them, all but drown them, fling them apart, float them back together. The river winds like a fugue through the marrow of the true narrative which is nothing less than the ongoing relation between Huck and the runaway slave, this Nigger Jim whose name embodies the very stuff of the slave system itself—his name is not Jim but Nigger Jim. The growth of love and knowledge between the runaway white and the runaway black is . . . full of betrayal and nourishment, separation and return. So it manages to touch that last fine nerve of the heart where compassion and irony speak to one another and thereby give a good turn to our most protected emotions.
>
> . . . One comes to realize all over again that the near-burned-out, throttled, hate-filled affair between whites and blacks is still our great national love-affair. . . . "Huckleberry Finn" frees us to think of democracy and its sublime, terrifying promise.

Mailer flawed his credentials as a Finnophile by admitting that at the age of ten or so he much enjoyed *Tom Sawyer*, but *Huckleberry Finn* as a sequel sadly disappointed him; and then in college he was puzzled by the high regard nearly everyone who taught American Lit. "professed for it. Obviously I was waiting for an assignment from the New York Times." (That is the reverse of my experience; I read *Tom Sawyer* second and thought it much inferior, and still do.) Evidence is strong that Mailer not only reread the book at the paper's behest but also explored the commentaries with which critical enterprise has cumbered it. Maybe he also recalled bits of those American Lit. lectures in Sever Hall. Anyway, the above carries the authentic flavor of not a justified Finnophilia but an overwrought Finnomania.

For a symptomatic error: Mailer's overplayed "Nigger Jim" motif has no standing in court. No such label appears in *Huckleberry Finn*. It is exactly wrong to say "his name is not Jim but Nigger Jim." Lowercase "nigger" is freely used, of course, as an intrinsic (however distasteful nowadays) part of Huck's supple, shapely, back-homey idiom. Others, black and white, refer to Jim as "nigger"; but Mark Twain's text designates him only as "Jim" or "Miss Watson's Jim"; no racial tag, no capitalized "Nigger Jim" to make him the archetype symbol of black slavery. The only capitalization involved is his notion that to achieve freedom will make him rich, for he will then own himself, and a slave trader had offered Miss Watson $800 for him. Yet that "Nigger Jim" distortion is curiously common in the accumulated literature—used by, among others, Hemingway, Ralph Ellison, Lionel Trilling, Leslie Fiedler. It typifies in miniature the liberties so often taken with the book in hopes of squaring it with such critical clichés as Mailer purveys in dwelling on the river-as-symbol and the erotic overtones of black/white. The prurient tingle in that last may stem from Fiedler's essay, conspicuous a generation ago, "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey"—a model of impertinence (in both senses) that lumped Huck/Jim, Ishmael/Queequeg, Leather-Stocking/Chingachgook, and Dana/Hope as intertwisted symbols of latent homosexuality in cronyism between whites and nonwhites.

But the general tenor of Mailer's overture actually goes back much further, almost three generations, to Waldo Frank's *Our America* (1919). Its hot-news statement was that *Huckleberry Finn* is:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the voice of American chaos. . . . Mark Twain had meant it for the mere sequel of another tale . . . but his theme was too apt a symbol. . . . Huck is America. And Huck floats down the current of a mighty Stream . . . is the American epic hero . . . an illiterate lad . . . expresses our germinal past . . . the movement of the American soul through all the sultry climates of the Nineteenth Century. . . . The whole gamut of American beginnings ran with the river. And Huck along. One rises from the book lost in a great rhythmic flow . . . and upon the heaving surface of this Flood . . . the American soul like a midge upon the tide of the world.

That really belongs in the *New Yorker*'s "How's That Again?" department. How can chaos have anything so integrated as a voice? "The whole gamut of American beginnings"? For its first century and a half our America had little to do with the Mississippi. "One rises from the book lost in a great rhythmic flow"? One does so deploring Mark Twain's imposing on the reader that coda of thirty-thousand words of contrived farce. "Illiterate lad"? Frank must have meant *uncultivated*, for Huck has learned to read and write; his gleanings from the books found in the wrecked steamboat set off entertaining discussion between him and Jim. About the only element that stands scrutiny is the description of the Father of Waters as a "mighty Stream." It was those wild swings that not only began but have permeated in spirit the tradition of irresponsible rhapsody ever since, enhancing the epiphany of *Huckleberry Finn:* no gold and no myrrh, but lots of Frankincense.

Until *Our America* set those symbols tinkling, Finnophiles had been content to call the book something gloriously close to the Great American Novel that literary patriots longed for. By 1913, for instance, John Macy, eminent critic and liberal friend of good writing, rated it "the greatest piece of American fiction . . . one of the unaccountable triumphs of creative power that happen now and again." But once Frank had shown the way to lily gilding, throngs of disciples came heaping their extravagances—some imitative, some innovative—on their leader's. Thirty years ago Leo Marx had reason to complain that "the problem of evaluating the book is as much obscured by unqualified praise as it once was by parochial hostility"—meaning that hostility of the librarians of the 1890s who rejected it as "unqualified trash." Further apropos, Kenneth S. Lynn later protested that "the only trash connected with *Huckleberry Finn* is what emanates from the teachers thereof" and ascribed at least part of the trouble to "professional interpreters of literature [lacking] a sense of humor."

Among them such interpreters have given Ole Man River quite a beating, working up the world's first 2,348-mile cliché. Though Macy had early deplored a tendency to call *Huckleberry Finn* "an Odyssey of the Mississippi," in 1931 Constance Rourke's widely acclaimed *American Humor* said it "gave to the great flood of the Mississippi an elementary place in the American experience, with the river a dominating fantasy, with the small human figures as prototypes of those untethered wanderers who had appeared so often on the popular horizon." If that really means anything, it casts Huck, Jim, Huck's drunken rattlesnake of a father, and Colonel Sherburn as abstract walk-ons in a World's Fair pageant cobbled together round a river theme. Ever since, the symbol seekers have clogged the Mississippi with pretentious metaphor and simile; a fair sample is Pascal Covici's: "Just as the river flows between slave and free territory [as it doesn't during most of the book], so Huck's soul balances between an infinite series of opposites."

F. R. Leavis took high ground when seeing in Huck's story "a central theme . . . the complexity of ethical values in a society with a complex tradition." Trilling raised the ante: the novel "has the truth of moral passion [and] . . . deals directly with the virtue and depravity of man's heart." His credentials were better than Mailer's: "One may read [*Huckleberry Finn*] at ten and then annually ever after, and each year find that it is as fresh as before." But he goes on, ominously, "Each year adds a new growth of meaning," and likens the first-time reader to an Athenian boy growing up with the *Odyssey*. To cue in his river motif, Trilling quotes Eliot about the Mississippi as "a strong brown god" and proceeds: "Huck himself is the servant of the river-god and he comes very close to being aware of the divine nature of the being he serves. . . . The river itself is only divine; it is not ethical and good. But its nature seems to foster the goodness of those who love it and try to fit themselves into its ways." This could be a Wagnerian libretto starring Heidi.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Trilling also joined the movement to inflate Jim into a figure from an anti-racist WPA mural: "In Jim [Huck] finds his true father . . . the boy and the negro slave form a family, a primitive community—and it is a community of saints." Somewhat later Kenneth Rexroth formally ushered Huck's adventures into the lecture-room Valhalla: "It would have been impossible for Mark Twain not to have had Homer constantly in mind. . . . Huck and Jim are obviously Crusoe and Friday reborn. . . . Twain's novel occupies the same symbolic universe as Whitman's *Passage to India*." No doubt Sam Clemens read one or another translation of Homer, but I know of nothing in his writings to show it. And if there are two important American writers less alike than Mark Twain and Walt Whitman, it would have to be Finley Peter Dunne and Theodore Dreiser.

The effect—and doubtless the purpose—of all that sort of thing is so to blur the actual nature of the text in question that it will sound like a blend of *Moby-Dick* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* ghosted by Thomas Wolfe, its chief merits consisting of the river-symbolism and the way Nigger Jim as essence of black slavery causes Huck's soul to bud and blossom. That might make a notable book, but it would not be *Huckleberry Finn*. If it were, those elements would dominate the text; whereas, in fact, of its roughly one hundred and ten thousand words, a rough workup shows only three thousand dealing with the river in any manner suggesting a pervasive symbol; and only twenty-two hundred dealing with slavery, including the deservedly famous long passage about Huck's decision to go to hell in order to stay on Jim's side. Clearly the river and Jim-as-slave are only minor, though priceless, matters recurring off and on—indeed hit-or-miss—in an overflowing, rambling yarn.

Waldo Frank, Lionel Trilling, and Norman Mailer may serve as benchmarks between which some sixty years of academic busywork has evolved several other gratuitous mythologies. More may be hovering, for so far, nobody has imaginatively exploited the book's thunderstorms, a specialty of Mark Twain's. (And how well he did them!) His patent delight in meteorological turmoil could afford some candidate for a Ph.D. God-knows-what pregnant surmises. For present purposes, however, most of the orthodox range is succinctly packaged in a purchase I recently made at the bookstore of a famous university town: *Cliffs Notes on Huckleberry Finn* by James L. Roberts of the University of Nebraska's department of English—one of that teeming series of handbooks supplying apprehensive students with synopses of and deep thoughts about *Beowulf, The Catcher in the Rye, Anna Karenina, Don Quixote*. . . . Its text is unsettlingly shaky on the exact meanings of words, using *persecute* for *prosecute*, *instigate* for *initiate*, *imitate* for *impersonate* and calls the King's and the Duke's treacherous sale of Jim back into slavery their "final calumny." But it is a thorough $2.75 worth.

Dutifully it leads off with ". . . the Odyssey down the river . . . immediately takes upon [*sic*] a mythical quality" and touches all bases from then on. "Birth and rebirth" are soon symbolizing away, starting when Huck fakes being murdered to get away from Pap and then, on Jackson's Island, enjoys the attempt to find his presumably waterlogged body. Every time he assumes a false identity to get out of trouble, birth and rebirth raise their chubby little hands. Pap carries two layers of significance: first he symbolizes the brutality of the civilization that Huck mistrusts—Pap being the least civilized figure Mark Twain could draw—then later is alleged to provide an antithetic parallel to Jim's dismay over having struck his deaf daughter. The name of the wrecked steamboat, *Walter Scott*, betokens Mark Twain's scorn for the Author of *Waverley*. The ease with which the King and the Duke impose on others shows how "only through the sentimentalizing and the gullibility of the general public can such rogues flourish." Huck's shying away from "sivilization" correlates with Jim's "quest of freedom from slavery." The fits of loneliness that Huck, reasonably enough, associates with the unrelievedly empty expanse of river must be further linked to "the vastness of the frontier . . . and the formidable forests which surrounded the settlements"—neither of which elements has a part in the story. The masterly pages about the Grangerford house and Emmeline as poet and artist—one of the most delightful pieces of writing in English—are adduced merely as part "of Twain's technique of using Huck as a realistic reporter . . . [and] satire against those who have . . . bad taste in almost everything." The undertaker, rat,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and dog at the Wilks funeral—one of the funniest things ever written—is solemnly identified as "the first significant American satire on the sentimentality of funeral customs." All this is derivative, of course, distilled off from a mash of the handbook's elders and betters; but that makes it an invaluable museum of Finnomania.

Those *Cliffs Notes* thus supply what it is advisable to regurgitate at exam time. But this *Huckleberry Finn* item will soon need revision. That fresh-off-the-press *Hundred Years of Huckleberry Finn* has added to the compost 180,000 more words from twenty-five qualified scholars.

The editor's preface asks: "Do we really need . . . another couple of dozen essays on that novel" and then assures itself that the following contributions triumphantly show "how inexhaustible a source of the need for fresh commentary *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has been, is, no doubt will be." No doubt. Once established, perpetual motion takes a lot of braking.

Allison R. Ensor's able account of the illustrations that have visually interpreted Huck, Jim, Aunt Sally, et al. over the last century has value for even the mere Finnophile. So has David Sewell's expert discussion of the subtle variations of Mark Twain's manipulations of language. Beyond that, however, the book suggests numerous well-meaning blind men so engrossed in elaborating farfetched insights that if the elephant were to walk out on them they'd hardly notice.

Among them a certain professor of English, who dabbles in psychoanalysis and naturally leans heavily on Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, describes Huck as testing "the affection of Jim, his totemic second father, in the masculine Sacred Forest of Jackson's Island, then in the feminine coils of the river monster." But it is an unalloyed professor of English who, noting that the late Peter Wilks left three daughters, suggests that the whole Wilks episode is "an inverse duplication of King Lear." For another professor, the name Finn, admittedly drawn from the town drunk of Mark Twain's boyhood, nevertheless implies "Huck's association with the river and the fish on which he and Jim depend . . . with its reference to a legendary Gaelic warrior . . . it also implies that a former grandeur lies behind the family debased by . . . Pap Finn." Still another professor treats Pap at more respectful length in his highly original analysis of an alcoholic psychopath: he represents "anarchic individualism . . . because he feels none of the positive ties of family and affection. . . ."

Though he has had no academic training, Huck comes up with some pretty breathless subtleties; for instance, he detects "an underlying kinship between Emmeline's speedy tributes for [*sic*] the dead and Buck's monomaniacal haste to kill a Shepherdson." From observing the King and the Duke he deduces "that the confidence man is no longer a marginal predator but a national symbol of the American character." Or, less actively, in the trendy light of the 1980s, he "represents the typically helpless victim of a world in which nightmare, absurd quests for identity, alienation, and apocalypse are the facts of daily life." But he comes down with a thud as still another essayist denigrates him and associates: He is only "a dimly comprehending fumbler and stooge"; Tom Sawyer "a dominating knave"; Jim "a victim." Indeed Tom is "the true protagonist" of this novel—in which he appears in less than a third of its length.

These givers of good measure customarily speak as though the patterns they ascribe to the text are Mark Twain's doing. If so, in writing *Huckleberry Finn* he consciously meant: to teach "that whereas utopianism is possible, utopians are not"; to "lead us to comprehend how the Civil War was possible"; to inculcate "the hard lessons about accumulated wealth that he thought Americans . . . were in need of learning." Even a temporary reference to the biblical Moses in the early section is seized on as Mark Twain's "clear prefiguration of Huck's . . . mission . . . helping Jim to gain freedom." And—take a long breath here—the book as a whole embodies his "understanding of human life . . . as . . . a precarious continuity in which identity is maintained only by our willingness to accept definition of ourselves from the norms of society and the expectations of others." Now exhale.

The other possibility is, of course, that such speculations detect and describe the symptoms of subliminal struggles within the writer's mind or emotional depths, however labeled, which implies that, among them, this scratch committee of earnest specialists in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

literature can deduce from the outside and, long after the fact, what Mark Twain had in mind, or what his maimed psyche hoped to saddle him with. It all makes *Huckleberry Finn* a cryptopsychodrama riding seven mutually contradictory ways at once. Fortunately we don't need to guess what Mark Twain would have said about this amateur psychiatrists' grab bag. He led off the first edition of *Huckleberry Finn* with this "Notice": "Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot." And you should see what ingenious squirmings occur when a loyal significance seeker goes to the mat with that.

Another gnarly problem for the *Huckleberry Finn* industry is that brought up by *Cliffs Notes* in review question number nine, as well as by several of the experts in *One Hundred Years of Huckleberry Finn:* "If the purpose of the trip down the river is to gain freedom for Jim, why do they continue deeper and deeper into slave territory?"

The simple, maybe adequate, answer is that Mark Twain usually wrote in bursts of improvisation. He was not the man to bother reflecting that, if keeping Jim from being sold down the river—his stated reason for running away—was primary, all he had to do the first dark night was catch a drift log and swim to the free-soil Illinois shore from Jackson's Island before Huck ever found him there. Indeed, Jim makes it clear that he has some such intention: "I'd . . . swim asho', en take to de woods on de Illinois side." Had he thus tried his luck, however, all Mark Twain's suddenly new plans for Huck and Jim together would have miscarried. Further, this question illuminates the book's inadequacy as the sermon-after-the-fact against slavery that it is often thought to be; as a devoted student of it recently wrote: "The principal purpose was to describe an ignorant 14-year-old boy's awakening to the injustices of slavery." That is a worthy purpose, and Mark Twain had come to hate what slavery had been, as certain of his other works show. But if that was what he had in mind for *Huckleberry Finn,* he had a strange way of going at it.

Back to review question number nine. It is likely that, on picking up the unfinished draft of *Huckleberry Finn* after it had lain fallow for years, he sent Huck and Jim's raft past Cairo, the last vestige of free soil, because he was obeying an imperative impulse to show readers the raffish settlements along the lower Mississippi that he had known as a river pilot. Since this resulted in the central narrative that is perhaps America's best book, *bravo!* But it blurred the values of Jim's predicament. Worse, Tom Sawyer reenters the story fifty thousand words later and embarks on frivolous claptrap to free Jim in spite of Tom's being aware, as Huck and Jim are not, that on her deathbed Miss Watson has already freed him. Those capers cut the emotional ground from under the freedom-for-good-old-Jim issue and identify Mark Twain as the most irresponsible great writer since Shakespeare, who was so heedless about the way his plays got printed. Yet, the over-subtilizers being what they are, many a critic unable to accept this has sought to maintain that, looked at creatively, the misbegotten ending really symbolizes the values of the trip-down-the-river—or some such casuistry. Whereas what Leo Marx wrote thirty years ago remains starkly true: "To take seriously what happens on the Phelps farm is to take lightly the entire downstream journey."

Huck's growing affection for Jim and Jim's loyalty to Huck creep up on the reader just as they should. That has set certain observers—most cogently Philip Foner—nominating him the hero of the story. Even if one limits "hero" to the classic meaning of "principal male character," the notion is unsound; if there is a hero, Huck is it. That Mark Twain had nothing like a Jim-hero in mind is obvious, as the Tomfoolery on the Phelps place leaches away the dignity that Huck has sensed in Jim during the trip down the river. The basis for Jim-as-hero was scant anyway. The first few pages show him as pretentiously self-impressed by his own exaggerations of superstitious delusions. Some of the E. W. Kemble illustrations that Mark Twain personally insisted on (more numerous in the first edition than in subsequent trade editions) make Jim a pop-eyed, grinning semi-caricature. Saying that he was "white inside" and "had an uncommon level head for a nigger" is as far as Huck goes toward what today's standards would prefer. Toward the end Jim regains some dignity by risking return to slavery in order to get Tom's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wound looked after. By the last time we see him, he has reverted to the chuckleheaded superstitions of the first chapter. In *Tom Sawyer Abroad,* a feeble sequel, Mark Twain returns him to the kind of dispute that led Huck to say: "You can't learn a nigger to argue." Ralph Ellison had cause to write: "I could imagine myself as Huck Finn . . . but not Nigger Jim . . . a white man's inadequate portrait of a slave."

The customary Huck image also shows disconcerting flaws. Can "the sensitive and suffering Huck" really serve as "a conscience for an entire era and culture," as Frank Baldanza asserted? DeLancey Ferguson was much closer to the actuality: Mark Twain, he writes, "simply took a clever and uninhibited boy and let the whole world of the Mississippi happen to him." His willingness to go to hell for Jim is notably overplayed. It is not mounting revulsion against slavery, as such, but generous defiance for personal reasons of the "sivilization" that he already dislikes and of which slavery, as he knows it, is an integral part. Trilling saw this: "He no more condemns slavery than Tristram and Lancelot condemn marriage." What happens to Huck is often character revealing, never character developing—never a flash of light on the road to Damascus. It is often laid down that major characters in great fictions should mature or degenerate or somehow shift levels of emotional leverage. By that criterion this very great fiction falls short. Huck begins and ends as the atomic, incorrigible maverick, an archetype that, one hopes—anxiously—can resist any amount of academic wear and tear.

Discussion of what Huck would do or feel under given circumstances is, of course, a tribute to his creator. Thus to be speculated about like a real person happens to only the aristocracy of fictional characters: Hamlet, Falstaff, Iago, Rebecca Sharp, Beatrix Esmond, Anna Karenina, Julien Sorel. . . . In that fourth dimension not only is personality distilled to a proof higher than real people usually show, it can also jar the rest of the cast into acting over their heads. One comes to know Queen Gertrude only after Hamlet drags her into his magnetic field. That is why none of Mark Twain's major characters outside *Huckleberry Finn*—not Roxy or Hank Morgan or Colonel Sellers—persists in the memory like the minor ones passing through Huck's orbit: not only Jim and Pap, but Mrs. Loftus and Aunt Sally and even Buck Harkness, that paragon of trenchant pantomime.

Those special vividnesses come of refraction through the pellucid but also prismatic Huck-medium in the first person. This kind of narrative makes two stern demands: The narrator, like Huck, may say he is writing for print, but his text must come out like speech sublimated without losing texture and informality. And all the while he chats away, his soul and ways of thinking and feeling must covertly emerge until the reader knows him rather better than he probably knows himself. In all those respects Huck sits among the royalty of first-persons, along with Barry Lyndon, Lorelei Lee, Gully Jimson, and Jack Keefe. This is fast company, but his way with his unadorned native speech is beyond comment. Its virtues persist in many pages of that misbegotten final section as a half reason for being reconciled to its presence. Under his surefooted sentences well up the many affinities of congenial words and the unaccountable, ever-various throb of our astonishing native tongue. In the last few pages before Tom's jiggery-pokery begins, Huck is reconnoitering the Phelps plantation:

> It was all still and Sunday-like, and hot and sunshiny; the hands was gone to the fields; and there was that kind of faint dronings of bugs and flies in the air that makes it seem so lonesome and like everybody's dead and gone; and if a breeze fans along and quivers the leaves it makes you feel mournful because you feel like it's spirits whispering—spirits that's been dead ever so many years—and you always think they're talking about *you.* As a general thing it makes a body wish *he* was dead too, and done with it all. . . . I went around and clumb over the back-stile by the ash-hopper and started for the kitchen. When I got a little ways I heard the dim hum of a spinning wheel wailing up and sinking along down again; and then I knowed for certain I wished I was dead—for that *is* the lonesomest sound in the world.

Never mind the ash-hopper and the spinning wheel and the superstitious set of the poor-white mind as cultural data. The same voice in other keys can strike brisk and savory: a certain kind of meat tastes like "old cold cannibal"; the King and the Duke "took on about that dead tanner like they'd lost the twelve disciples"; "most folks don't go to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

church only when they've got to, but a hog is different." Hats off. Shoes off the feet. That bush is really burning.

Strange that all those hundreds of thousands of words conscientiously spun out about *Huckleberry Finn* for the edification of others should practically ignore the things that make it great. The spinners necessarily suggest the proverbial musicologist so intent on the score that he doesn't hear the music. Indeed in this case, the score has small relation to the music: not enough river, too little anti-slavery parable. . . . What's printed in the novel seems far from what Professor Procrustes was lecturing about yesterday. In that sense Mailer may have been right about his American Lit. first time around.

Such muttering is probably futile. Literary fashions, like others, have their own momentum. That new *Huckleberry Finn* musical is entitled—what else?—*Big River*. George F. Will, the *Newsweek* columnist, weighs in asking: "Is the steamboat that wrecks Huck's raft—his pristine island of self-government—a symbol of the machine destroying Huck's garden?". Whereas years ago Justin Kaplan cast that steamboat as "the image of avenging society." Whereas, further, in *Hundred Years* Jeffrey Steinbrink suggests that the smashup betokens "a frenzy of anger, frustration, and resignation" overcoming Mark Twain because his plot wouldn't behave to suit him. Actually what it probably symbolizes is the storyteller's wish to get Huck ashore without Jim so he can spend a while with the Grangerfords.

The Finnophile can only stubbornly stand on the credo drawn up by Bernard De Voto, a sound, if often overextended, stalwart: "There is a type of mind, the lovers of *Huckleberry Finn* belong to it, which prefers experience to metaphysical abstractions and the thing to its symbol. Such minds think of *Huckleberry Finn* as the greatest work of nineteenth century fiction in America precisely because it is not a voyage in pursuit of a white whale but a voyage among feudists, mobbers, thieves, rogues, nigger-hunters and murderers, precisely because Huck never encounters a symbol but always some actual human being working out an actual destiny."

Huck called the King's running off at the mouth at the Wilks's house "soul-butter and hogwash." That phrase kept occurring to me as I prowled back through the thickets of Frankincense.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Louis D. Brandeis Reappraised

THOMAS K. McCRAW

Louis D. Brandeis is, or until recently was, a secular saint of American culture. His success as muckraker and litigator during the Progressive Era, his crusades for Zionism and for Woodrow Wilson's New Freedom, and his twenty-three years of distinguished service on the Supreme Court—all of these gained him a degree of honor matched by only a handful of Americans. As one of his daughters wrote him in 1939, on the occasion of his retirement from the Court at the age of eighty-three, "Measuring my words, I do not see how any one person could have done more than you have done." When Brandeis died two years later, the obituaries and tributes assumed a tone of reverence, even awe. At that moment, and for the next forty years, his place in the American pantheon seemed secure, as solid as that of Washington or Lincoln.

Yet by the 1980s, a number of scholars had begun to raise troubling questions about Brandeis's career. The Berkeley historian Richard Abrams showed that Brandeis's fabled victory in the New Haven railroad fight (1906–13) had rested on a series of mistaken premises about the future of New England's economy. A little later, the Israeli scholar Allon Gal asserted in his well-researched book, *Brandeis of Boston*, that some of the crusades Brandeis undertook in the "public interest" were based primarily on Brandeis's psychological reactions to rising anti-Semitism in Boston. In 1982, the political scientist Bruce Allen Murphy created a public uproar with his flawed but provocative volume *The Brandeis-Frankfurter Connection: The Secret Political Activities of Two Supreme Court Justices*. Murphy's book, sensationalized by his publisher almost to the point of misrepresentation, did show beyond much doubt that Brandeis had engaged in activities he would not have condoned in other members of the Court. Finally, I suggested in 1984 in my own book, *Prophets of Regulation*, that Brandeis misunderstood the forces underlying the rise of big business and consistently advocated economic policies that were certain to reduce consumer welfare.

Taken together, these works touched on some of the most important themes of American historiography: the role of lawyers in American life (Brandeis having been perhaps the greatest litigator the country has yet produced); the adversarial relationship between government and big business (unique in the United States, among democratic market economies); and the underlying nature of reform during the Progressive Era (when Brandeis became famous as the "People's Lawyer"). At the same time, these books and others provided new clues to some lingering questions about Brandeis's character and personality. What social forces, for example, had combined to transform an obscure young Southerner, who had quietly adopted the Brahmin style of life and had practiced in Boston for twenty-five years as a conventional commercial lawyer, into the famous *Brandeis*, a notorious muckraker and feared opponent of what he called the "curse of bigness"? Why, after a lifetime of disregarding his own Jewishness, had Brandeis in his middle fifties suddenly embraced his ethnicity and become

THOMAS K. McCRAW is a professor at the Graduate School of Business Administration at Harvard University. His most recent book, *Prophets of Regulation: Charles Francis Adams, Louis D. Brandeis, James M. Landis, Alfred E. Kahn*, was awarded the 1985 Pulitzer Prize in history.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an ardent Zionist? And why, once he had taken his seat on the Supreme Court, had he pursued political activities that almost certainly amounted to serious judicial improprieties?

Brandeis's career as a practicing lawyer, which began in 1878 and ended with his appointment to the Supreme Court in 1916, coincided almost precisely with the rise of giant corporations in America. Brandeis watched the business revolution as it developed, tried his best to understand it, and found it, on the whole, hostile to his own central values of autonomous individualism. For that reason he fought it, and in his crusades against the "curse of bigness," he was a formidable champion.

Several elements of his background shaped Brandeis's individualistic values. Eight years before his birth in 1856, his Bohemian Jewish parents had fled Europe during the suppression of the democratic movements of 1848. Settling in Louisville, Kentucky, the family prospered in the grain merchandising business but suffered setbacks during the depression of the 1870s. Louis Brandeis, an intellectually gifted child, was educated at the German and English Academy in Louisville and later, when the depression in America drove the family temporarily back to Europe, at the Annen-Realschule in Dresden. He entered Harvard Law School in 1875, at the age of eighteen, and made a phenomenal record. Because he finished the standard course of study at Harvard before he reached twenty-one, a special ruling was required to allow him to graduate. A year later, in 1878, a fellow student wrote a letter to his mother describing the young Brandeis:

> He graduated last year from Law School and is now taking a third year here—was the leader of his class and one of the most brilliant legal minds they have ever had here—and is but little over twenty-one withal. Hails from Louisville—is not a College graduate, but has spent many years in Europe, has a rather foreign look, and is currently believed to have some Jew blood in him, though you would not suppose it from his appearance—Tall, well-made, dark, beardless, and with the brightest eyes I ever saw. Is supposed to know everything and to have it always in mind. The Profs. listen to his opinions with the greatest deference, and it is generally correct. There are traditions of his omniscience floating through the School. One I heard yesterday—A man last year lost his notebook of Agency lectures. He hunted long and found nothing. His friends said—Go and ask Brandeis . . .—he knows everything—perhaps he will know where your book is—He went and asked. Said Brandeis—"Yes—go into the Auditor's room, and look on the west side of the room, on the sill of the second window, and you will find your book"—And it was so.

Thus the Brandeis literature began as hagiography, and it continued in that vein for a hundred years. In many respects it resembles the Lincoln literature, and indeed the two men are often compared: Kentucky origins, self-made success, even physical resemblance—their craggy, quizzical features, disorderly hair, jug ears, deep-set bright eyes.

Substantial biographies began to accumulate long before Brandeis's death, and in the years afterward there came a flood of writing, nearly all of it elaborating on the established legend. Despite this wide coverage, a few mysteries, such as those mentioned above, continued to puzzle scholars. The answers came only when Brandeis's personal papers were made fully available. In 1971, thirty years after his death, the first two volumes of his collected letters appeared, and by 1978 the remaining three volumes. For a number of scholars, these papers constituted a treasure. Their publication represented an event that would illuminate the history of American Zionism, American reform, and the character and career of Brandeis himself. It was thought that the collected letters might force open the last unknown chambers of his life.

What they in fact showed was that Brandeis had been less a man of thought than of action. None of the letters conveyed the impression of a deep conceptual intelligence. In them appeared little evidence of reflection, none of rumination: no agonizing over one's proper role in life or relationship with God, no self-doubt on any score. Instead, the letters depicted a quick, confident, and often rigid mind preoccupied with some immediate practical task; a controlled, carefully managed life with no wasted motion, little humor, and no frivolity. Brandeis seemed to have no time for literature, no sense of the power of language. Unlike his fellow jurists Holmes, Hand, and Cardozo, he has no entry in Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations*.

In these respects Brandeis stands closer to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Washington than to Lincoln. In contrast to the papers of Lincoln, with their characteristic reflectiveness and love of the fine phrase, Brandeis's letters, like those of Washington (who was forever requisitioning this many horses or that many hogsheads of flour), show an engrossing preoccupation with the details of specific pressing tasks. Brandeis held himself aloof from other men, encouraged veneration, and became impossible to know well. As Harold Laski once remarked, he was "not quite human in his contacts." Didactic and moralistic, Brandeis liked to instruct his wife, daughters, and others around him as to how they should live. For both his intimates and the outside world, he cultivated a particular image for himself, and he shaped his behavior in service to that image. As the editors of his letters put it in a sentence that might have been written about Washington, "Brandeis's towering strength rested on his own recognition of that strength. . . . He understood how to behave like a symbol." Today, we understand something of what that symbol represents. Brandeis's life, and particularly his antimodern ideology, throws into high relief the clash between traditional American individualist values and the opposing tendencies of modernization in Western society.

Brandeis himself detested the accoutrements of modern life. He despised telephones and automobiles. He never went shopping, even for his own clothes. In his recreation he abjured team and spectator sports in favor of solitary pursuits such as canoeing. During his years on the Supreme Court, one of his law clerks recalled, Brandeis employed no secretary or typist. Instead he sent longhand drafts of his opinions directly to the printer, then revised from galley proofs, sending successive revisions back for resetting, often the six or seven times. Despite his reputation as "People's Lawyer," Brandeis was no consumer advocate in the present-day sense. He often denounced consumers for their complicity in the rise of big business, calling them "servile, self-indulgent, indolent, ignorant."

However accurate his view of consumers may have been, in the end Brandeis's emphasis on the "curse of bigness" proved to be an illogical principle on which to base realistic remedies for the ills of modern life. Given the stark fact of a world population measured in several billions, the idea of a "curse of bigness" becomes an aesthetic construct more than an analytical or prescriptive one. Certainly it is of little help in shaping economic policy. In the case of business organizations, bigness is indeed a curse for some industries (leather, apparel, food service); but for others (steel, oil, automobiles), it represents not only a virtue but an inevitability. Recent research in many disciplines—history, economics, sociology, business administration—has clearly identified clusters of industries at both ends of a long scale measuring the size of typical companies in each industry. The results of this research show remarkable uniformity from one country to another: the United States, Britain, Germany, France, Japan, and other democratic market economies. Nevertheless, numerous private entrepreneurs and public officials, particularly in the United States, have tried to move industries around on this scale. They have endeavored to make naturally small business large or naturally large business small. They have had little success.

For all Brandeis's brilliance, this inherent diversity of industries eluded him, just as it eluded many later critics and crusaders. The reason in his case, and often in theirs as well, was that the implicit but transcendent test, the hidden litmus, has been not economic efficiency, nor even political liberty and social justice, but instead an aesthetic preference for small size: hence the "curse" of bigness. Granted that the danger of centralized power is no illusion. But in the world as it actually is, the remedy cannot be found in breaking up all large organizations or in sending urban masses back into the countryside. As the experience of the Cultural Revolution in China and the drastic deurbanization movement in Cambodia suggests, decisive decentralization may not be intrinsically democratic. It may instead require totalitarian methods. And this, of course, represents a precise negation of the individualist premises from which the Brandeisian analysis begins.

Although the economic and political issues at stake here are still often framed as a simple choice between bigness and smallness, as they nearly always were framed by Brandeis himself, the argument so stated cannot be settled. It cannot even be moved beyond its logical development as of the beginning of the twentieth century. Yet even then the reasons

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for its bankruptcy as an economic argument were already evident. They were evident in the subtle political alignments of that era that pitted the champions of small producers and shopkeepers, represented by Brandeis, against the champions of consumers and big business, represented by such writers as Herbert Croly and Walter Lippmann. In this sense, Brandeis was less the People's Lawyer than the small businessman's lawyer. In no real sense can he be considered the consumer's lawyer, because he was forced to defend high prices as a means of defending small business.

Imagine a secular saint from one of the principalities Brandeis himself admired and often cited in his denunciations of America's "curse of bigness"—Palestine (Israel), say, which is about one-seventieth the size of the United States in population; or Denmark, which is about one-fortieth. Imagine that from such a tiny national platform comes a denunciation of "the curse of smallness." And imagine that a philosopher of the aesthetic of bigness somehow evolves into a saint of Israeli or Danish culture. The oddness of it all catches the peculiar potency of an anti-bigness tradition in the one country with by far the largest economy and largest business enterprises in the world. In inquiring into the career of Louis Brandeis, then, perhaps we can better understand some of the ironies of our culture: the adversarial relationship between government and big business, and the distinctive role played by lawyers in American life.

After graduation from law school, Brandeis associated himself in practice with Samuel D. Warren, a classmate whose wealth and family connections provided a ready clientele as well as entrée into Boston social circles. Brandeis himself, with all his brilliance and his new Harvard connections, was yet a young Jew from Louisville, while Boston remained one of the most snobbish and ingrown of American cities. As a social outsider, he could afford no false steps. "I wish to become known as a practicing lawyer," he wrote Warren. "I wish to wait particularly for your letter giving the results of your examination of the prospects of a young law firm and more particularly your own prospects of securing business through your social and financial position." The firm of Warren and Brandeis enjoyed immediate success, in part because its first client was the paper manufacturing company owned by the Warren family.

Brandeis's continued prosperity depended not on the Warren connection but on his own drive and ability. Both were of the highest order. At Harvard, where he compiled what is still the best record in the law school's history, he had written of his "desperate longing for more law," and of the "almost ridiculous pleasure which the discovery or invention of a legal theory gives me." He referred to the law as his "mistress," holding a "grip on me" that he could not break. This passionate attachment served him well, as he became one of the most effective litigators in American history. He had all the requisite talents, all highly developed: the persistent inquisitiveness, the quick study, the sympathetic style, the skepticism, the love for combat.

In addition, he had two even more useful qualities. The first was a remarkable ability to convey a sense of the rightness of his client's cause. As one of his partners put it, "The prime source of his power was his intense belief in the truth of what he was saying. It carried conviction." The second quality was the very close attention he gave to the care of clients. "Cultivate the society of men—particularly men of affairs," Brandeis once advised a young associate in his firm. "A lawyer who does not know men is handicapped. . . . Every man that you know makes it to that extent easier to practice, to accomplish what you have in hand." Brandeis himself took great pains to know men. During his early years in Boston, he kept a small notebook in which he listed the names of everyone he met at social gatherings. Gradually he accumulated dozens of thick scrapbooks on all sorts of personal, legal, and political subjects. "Perhaps most important of all," he emphasized to his young associate, "is the impressing of clients and satisfying them. Your law may be perfect, your ability to apply it great and yet you cannot be a successful advisor unless your advice is followed; it will not be followed unless you can satisfy your clients."

Brandeis's careful development of his lawyerly skills reflected a characteristically shrewd management of his own career. "Know thoroughly each fact," he remonstrated in a memorandum to himself on the practice of law.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Don't believe client witness. Examine documents. Reason; use imagination. Know bookkeeping—the universal language of business: know persons. Far more likely to impress clients by knowledge of facts than by knowledge of law. Know not only specific case, but whole subject. Can't otherwise know the facts. Know not only those facts which bear on direct controversy, but know all facts and law that surround." Brandeis's emphasis on facts became a minor legend in itself, an important part of the sociological jurisprudence he advocated later in his career. "It has been one of the rules of my life," he once told a newspaper reporter, "that no one shall ever trip me up on a question of fact." Brandeis advised the young associate in his firm that the person "who practices law—who aspires to the higher places of his profession—must keep his mind fresh. It must be alert and he must be capable of meeting emergencies—must be capable of the tour de force." No American lawyer has ever been more capable of the tour de force than was Brandeis himself.

As a practicing lawyer, Brandeis focused on particular cases and controversies, not on general principles of economic development. Whereas the professional economist tends to think in generalizations and seek methods of accommodating varying points of view to one general policy that will promote overall economic growth, Brandeis sought victory for his client's interest at the expense of all others. One prominent member of the Boston bar wrote of Brandeis's intense competitiveness: "He fights to win, and fights up to the limit of his rights with a stern and even cruel exultation in the defeat of his adversary." As a busy attorney, Brandeis went rapidly from case to case, on a schedule set not by his own choice but by the dockets of courts and commissions. He became, as trial lawyers must, a quick expert on many different subjects: now railroads, now trusts, now conservation, now banking, now labor, now retailing. Of necessity, the expertise so rapidly acquired seldom ran very deep.

An outsider and a Jew, Brandeis did not attract the largest clients available to Boston law firms. These were the major banks and insurance companies, the railroads headquartered in the city, and the huge new manufacturing firms arising from the reorganizations and mergers of the period. His typical clients were not giant corporations, but small- and medium-sized manufacturers of boots, shoes, and paper, along with prominent Jewish wholesalers and retailers such as the Hechts and the Filenes. Following his own advice, Brandeis came to know these clients intimately. He impressed them with his factual knowledge of their businesses, and they employed him as counselor and advisor on a wide range of legal and business problems. Ultimately, this work on their behalf made him a millionaire. In turn, Brandeis also became identified politically with their interests; and much of the content of his later compaigns as "People's Lawyer"—particularly his approach to industrial bigness and the antitrust question—can be traced back to the problems and interests of these clients.

The most striking thing about Brandeis's triumphs as People's Lawyer was his almost extrasensory instinct for the winning ground. Here, time after time, he showed himself capable of the tour de force. He won his cases repeatedly, often against heavy odds; and the reputation for winning, in turn, became the essential element of an emerging Brandeis mystique. The uncanny ability to find the winning ground, a talent present in many great lawyers, reached in him an extremely pronounced form, as several of his best-known cases show. Four of these were *Muller v. Oregon* (1908, the case that made the "Brandeis brief" famous), the New Haven Railroad affair (1906–1913), the Ballinger-Pinchot controversy (1910), and the so-called Advance Rate Case before the Interstate Commerce Commission (1910). Together these episodes made him a celebrated national figure—made him *Brandeis*. In each, he deftly shifted the dispute away from his clients' weak points and onto novel ground. On all four occasions, he caught the opposition by surprise and emerged victorious.

The most revealing of the four was the Advance Rate Case before the ICC. This dramatic episode began in 1910, when American railroads petitioned for an across-the-board increase in freight rates. The railroads alleged that their costs had risen rapidly because of much higher labor rates and the inflationary pressures that had begun to plague the American economy. Shipping interests hired Brandeis to oppose the railroads' petition, and he embraced their cause with great vigor. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

identified them with the entrepreneurial firms he had long represented in Boston, some of which were significant shippers chronically involved in New England rate controversies. Also, Brandeis's father, a Louisville merchant, had dealt regularly with railroads, and Brandeis's brother Alfred was one of that city's major shippers of grain.

The national railroads, on the other hand, were sprawling interstate business giants. Several employed more than 100,000 persons, and the industry as a whole was widely regarded as unduly wealthy and powerful. If there was a "curse of bigness," American railroads were among the most cursed institutions in the world. Their request in 1910 for the rate increase was neither well timed nor well managed. Indeed, the very idea of a jointly requested across-the-board increase for all railroad corporations (the profitable along with the unprofitable) and for all items of cargo (money-makers and money-losers) seemed to reflect a political arrogance that had characterized the industry since the 1850s. Yet in retrospect it is clear that the railroads did need a rate increase. Their costs were rising rapidly and their roadbeds were deteriorating under the pressures of heavy traffic. The railroads' attorneys and financial officers presented a strong case before the ICC for a rate increase, buttressing their argument with page after page of persuasive statistical analysis.

Brandeis's response, breathtaking in its boldness, completely confounded opposition lawyers. First, he conceded that the railroad companies needed more money. But then he insisted that the proper source lay not in higher rates for shippers but in lower internal operating costs for the companies themselves. As his most telling point, Brandeis impressed on the commissioners the "fact" that the railroads were operating inefficiently. The companies, he said, were ignoring "scientific management," a series of new techniques associated with such efficiency experts as Frederick Winslow Taylor, Harrington Emerson, and Frank Gilbreth (the same Gilbreth later immortalized in *Cheaper by the Dozen*, written by two of his children). With the help of several efficiency experts whom he put on the witness stand, Brandeis spun out, day by day, a tale of miracles, of fantastic gains that would accrue from the railroads' conversion.

> Scientific management [said Brandeis] differs from that now generally practiced by the railroads, much as production by machinery differs from production by hand. . . . Under scientific management nothing is left to chance. All is carefully prepared in advance. Every operation is to be performed according to a predetermined schedule under definite instructions, and the execution under this plan is inspected and supervised at every point. Errors are prevented instead of being corrected. The terrible waste of delays and accidents is avoided. Calculation is substituted for guess, demonstration for opinion. The high efficiency of the limited passenger trains is sought to be obtained in the ordinary operations of the business. The same preparedness is invoked for industry which secured to Prussia her victory over France and to Japan her victory over Russia.

As if these remarkable results were not enough in themselves, Brandeis promised one final miracle. With his unerring sense for the winning ground, he elicited from witness Harrington Emerson an assertion that, under scientific management, the nation's railroads could save "at least $1,000,000 a day." This million-dollars-a-day slogan was taken up and broadcast throughout the country by newspapers. Cited again and again during the rate hearings, it took on a life of its own. Ultimately it seemed to be made true by virtue of endless repetition. Once more, Brandeis won his case. The ICC refused to give the railroads an additional penny.

Later on, railroad men, and some disinterested analysts as well, concluded that Brandeis's rabbit-from-the-hat promise of miraculous savings had simply dazzled and misled both the ICC and the public. Subsequent events in the railroad industry all but proved that scientific management had much less relevance for transportation and other service industries than it had for manufacturing. Brandeis himself gave little mention to scientific management during a second rate case that he conducted for the ICC only a few years later, in 1914. By that time the efficiency craze had begun to wane, the railroads were in deep trouble, and "at least $1,000,000 a day" had become old hat. And by the time of the war emergency of 1917–18, the railroads had fallen into such desperate financial straits that the federal government temporarily took over the entire industry. After a brief study, the government instituted by fiat very large across-the-board rate hikes of about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the size of the combined increases the railroads themselves had requested in the years between 1910 and 1918.

In January of 1916, President Wilson nominated Brandeis to a seat on the United States Supreme Court. That nomination, which came as a surprise to nearly everyone concerned, touched off a national furor. Brandeis's reputation at the time was comparable to that of, say, Ralph Nader or Jesse Jackson in our own day. In addition to this, there had never yet been a Jewish member of the Court, and Wilson's action occasioned both open and covert expressions of anti-Semitism. Still more opposition came from Brahmin Boston, which had turned against Brandeis during the long controversy over the New Haven railroad. The most serious chorus of objection, however, issued from legal organizations. Seven former presidents of the American Bar Association sent a joint protest to the Senate, urging that the appointment be rejected: "The undersigned feel under the painful duty to say to you that in their opinion, taking into view the reputation, character, and professional career of Mr. Louis D. Brandeis, he is not a fit person to be a member of the Supreme Court of the United States." The confirmation fight, which went on for five months, became one of the year's most newsworthy events. In the end the defense, bolstered by Wilson's ringing affirmation of Brandeis's merits, carried the day. The nomination clinched Wilson's own claim to progressive credentials, and the event itself ultimately became a cause célèbre in the history of American liberalism.

Once on the bench, Brandeis surprised his critics with his wisdom and judicial depth. He made a great judge, one of the most distinguished in American history. It was almost as if, having spent his entire previous career hurrying from one case to another and necessarily spreading himself too thin, he now at last enjoyed the time for the kind of reflection essential in thinking through his positions.

The hallmark of Brandeis's years on the Court proved to be his commitment to judicial restraint. In a period when the Court majority routinely overturned economic regulatory legislation as inconsistent with the Fifth or Fourteenth Amendment, Brandeis passionately opposed such activism. With single-minded consistency, he took the position that judges must allow legislators wide latitude and freedom to experiment. (He excepted only laws designed to limit civil liberties; there he threw off judicial restraint and voted to rule the legislation unconstitutional.) Always he appealed primarily to "the facts." Rapid industrialization, he argued, had produced unprecedented dislocations. If governments were denied the power to regulate industrial conditions, then the social fabric was going to split apart. Whether the case before the Court had to do with child labor, wages and hours, workmen's compensation, or railroad regulation, Brandeis held that judges must not arrogate to themselves undue authority to overturn legislative action. Relying time and again on the same kind of sociological jurisprudence that he himself had pioneered as a trial lawyer, he pointed to actual economic conditions as affording legislators a reasonable and not arbitrary basis for passing regulatory laws. In one dissent after another, Brandeis presented long, heavily footnoted opinions citing official statistics, reports of inspections, and academic studies from many disciplines. He conceived his role to be not only that of judge, but also of educator. Working his clerks as if they were graduate students searching for facts as well as legal precedents, he urged them to find and use any source that would bring new information to bear on issues before the Court.

In most of this, Holmes, his fellow "Great Dissenter," usually joined. But Holmes took a different approach to the same goal. Abjuring Brandeis's multitudinous facts and footnotes, the older man preferred to reason deductively. "Holmes," the legal scholar Samuel Konefsky writes, "contented himself with short statements as to why in his judgment the governmental action complained of was not 'unconstitutional.'" Brandeis, on the other hand, "invariably undertook the more arduous task of seeking to persuade that the measure was entirely necessary and 'constitutional.'" Harold Laski made the same point: "Holmes was a liberal by negation, [Brandeis] by positive affirmation." In this Brandeis contributed an important methodological innovation, and it is here that his great significance as a judge lies. As the years went by, the Court majority gradually began to accept the Brandeis way of looking at things. The culmination of this shift, which amounted to a sea change in American jurisprudence, came in the case

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954), some fifteen years after Brandeis's own retirement from the Court.

In cases having to do with business, Brandeis nearly always arrayed his copious "facts" in support of an individualistic, decentralized economy. Despite his impartiality in most other matters, he continued his campaign against the "curse of bigness," evidencing a powerful preference for the interests of small producers, wholesalers, and retailers over those of consumers. Several of his best-known opinions demonstrate this preference vividly: *American Column and Lumber Co., et al. v. U.S.*, 1921; *Quaker City Cab Company v. Pennsylvania*, 1928; *Liggett v. Lee*, 1933. As Max Lerner once commented, Brandeis did not make "too ascetic a dissociation between his views of public policy and his opinions." Brandeis's Court colleague Harlan F. Stone asked him to temper his partisanship in opinions on economic cases; and Holmes confided to a friend, "I told him once that when he had strong economic convictions I thought that he sometimes became the advocate and ceased to be detached—but it isn't often."

Because modern America could not return to the decentralist utopia of Brandeis's imagination, a nice irony suffuses many of his judicial opinions. It is the irony of using modern means to serve anti-modern ends. It matches the earlier ambivalence of Brandeis's innovative use of mass public pressure as a device to beat back the tide of the business revolution. Again Laski, musing on the riddle of Mr. Justice Brandeis, catches both the irony and the principle behind it: "His criterion for all action is an ethical individualism. I take him to be intellectually, as to ends, a romantic anachronism, but as to methods a really significant figure in the Court."

The contrast between Brandeis's anti-modern philosophy and his forward-looking jurisprudence provides still another index of why, overall, it is impossible to understand the meaning of his life, including even his years on the bench, without recognizing that at bottom he was an advocate, a champion of causes. During his long career as a professional litigator, his business was the winning of cases, and this is exactly where he excelled. His habit of victory is what makes him such an appropriate national symbol, since the entire advocacy system is so basic to the American polity, and even to the country's temper, as to be a defining characteristic throughout.

This has been true from the beginning of the American Republic. Lawyers such as Adams, Otis, Henry, Hamilton, Jefferson, and Madison led the Revolution. From 1790 to the present, nearly all judges have been lawyers, and so have about two-thirds of all U.S. Senators, one-half of the members of the House, and two-thirds of federal regulatory commissioners. None of this seems strange to most Americans, but in fact the government of no other country in the world is nearly so dominated by lawyers. Perhaps the most revealing index of all is the much lower number of lawyers in other major market economies. In 1977, the *New York Times* reported startling differences among countries, with the United States at one extreme:

Country	Lawyers per one million population
Japan	89
West Germany	449
United Kingdom	588
Canada	703
United States	1,981

This dramatic disproportion might be taken as symptomatic of many different characteristics of American culture. One is that entry into the legal profession has been open, without the guild-like restrictions that prevail elsewhere. Another is that many American lawyers forgo practice and instead enter into politics, manage businesses, teach, or engage in a variety of other pursuits. Many who do practice do not often litigate. In general, law as a career in America has been a way of keeping one's options open.

Whatever else it may mean, however, several points about the predominance of lawyers remain clear. As we all know, Americans have been more litigious than have citizens of other countries. They have been ready to sue at the drop of a whiplash and less likely to resolve differences through informal processes of consensus. They have been sensitive to due process and fond of pursuing appeals to courts of last resort. This deep trait of American culture has had profound effects on the history of government-business relations. Many lawyers, steeped in proceedings emphasizing ad-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

versarial advocacy, have defined the relationship between government and big business as another ongoing public battle in which one side must win and the other lose. This has become clearer than ever in an age of "public interest" lawyers such as Ralph Nader.

Louis Brandeis, as one of the first American lawyers routinely to take his cases beyond the courtroom and into the mass media, cultivated public opinion as systematically as he did a jury. Because he conceived his role to be that of champion, he went out his way to find a good fight and involve himself in it. Once the fight started, Brandeis displayed marvelous inventiveness in finding novel routes to victory. This is what made him such a splendid advocate and what gave such an air of anticipation—almost an expectation of surprise—to so many of his cases. As one senator said of Brandeis during the Supreme Court confirmation hearings, "He seems to like to do startling things and work under cover. He has disregarded or defied the proprieties. . . . He is of the material that makes good advocates, reformers, and crusaders, but not good or safe judges." The senator erred only in the prediction that Brandeis would make a poor judge.

In his crusade against bigness, Brandeis combined an intense moral passion with a compelling drive for victory; and the result gave his analysis an inflammatory tone more appropriate to the media to which he turned than to the courtroom from which he had come. "We are confronted in the twentieth century, as we were in the nineteenth century with an irreconcilable conflict," he wrote in 1911 in a newspaper article. "Our democracy could not endure half free and half slave. The essence of the trust is a combination of the capitalist, by the capitalist, for the capitalist." On another occasion he spoke of "the free soil upon which private monopoly has encroached." His fervor led Brandeis, as it had led the anti-slavery abolitionists before him, to advocate drastic solutions. "For their by-products shall you know the trusts," he declared; and he insisted that the only way to eliminate the by-products was to eradicate giant companies altogether, to rip them out root and branch. He brought to bear, as a great advocate would, every piece of artillery that stood even a remote chance of hitting the target. He denounced big businesses for their price-cutting, exploitation of labor, gulling of investors, and promotion of conspicuous consumption. Much as he had drawn in his earlier cases on every weapon that would contribute to victory, much as he had shifted the argument to any terms that would rout the enemy, so he was compelled to include any and all arguments in his battle against bigness. Given his task, he had no choice but to argue that big business became big only through unfair methods. Positing bigness to be unnatural, he was forced to discover illegitimate means of its evolution. Only there would he find the winning ground.

In our own long retrospect, it is clear that giant firms did indeed threaten the atomistic commonwealth Brandeis wanted America to become. It is equally clear, however, that these companies were not necessarily hostile to the values he saw as damaged through their "by-products." It might have reassured Brandeis to see into the future and to know that a very large number of industries (most, in fact) are of such an underlying economic character that they stand little chance of becoming big businesses. It did reassure him in the 1930s to see securities legislation bring an end to frenzied finance and achieve new protection for investors. Brandeis's old age was gladdened too by the New Deal's Wagner Act, which gave explicit federal protection for the right of workers to organize.

But as these events occurred, and as the rise of big business appeared in every market economy in the world, they constituted a step-by-step demolition of the Brandeis brief against bigness. They demonstrated that it was not bigness per se that had brought certain abuses, and that bigness raised no barrier to their abolition. In fact, for resolving some abuses, bigness held powerful advantages: it was far easier for the government to enforce legislation such as the Wagner Act against one huge corporation like General Motors or U.S. Steel than against thousands of small sweatshops. Only the mistaken idea that these "by-products" derived from a single root cause made them part of the antitrust question at all. As the political scientist Louis Hartz once remarked, "We think of the trust as an economic creation of American history, and we fail to see that it was just as much a psychological creation of the American Progressive mind." Brandeis's thinking reflected this tendency of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the period. In this sense as in others—his moralism, his fixation on the redemptive value of "facts"—he may be seen as a man of his time.

He did not, however, stand in the forefront of his time as an economic thinker. Of those who did, a number of contemporary academics (Richard Ely, Charles Van Hise, John Bates Clark) expressed remarkably prescient insights into the organizational revolution going on in the business world. So did several journalists. Perhaps the shrewdest critic of Brandeis's antibigness-ethic was Walter Lippmann of the *New Republic*. Lippmann, who in 1916 stood forth as the most eloquent defender of Brandeis's nomination to the Supreme Court, had earlier derided the nominee's crusade against bigness. More than thirty years younger than Brandeis, Lippmann saw that the real business revolution lay not in size but in organization and administration. As Lippmann wrote in his book *Drift and Mastery* (1914), the conduct of business was passing from shopkeepers and foremen "into a hierarchy of managers and deputies, who, by what would seem like a miracle to Adam Smith, are able to cooperate pretty well toward a common end." They were doing it, moreover, "in the first generation of administrative science," with no tradition to guide them. "The real news about business," Lippmann continued, "is that it is being administered by men who are not profiteers. The managers are on salary, divorced from ownership and from bargaining." They stood outside the old Smithian model, immune from petty haggling. "The motive of profit is not their personal motive. That is an astounding change."

Lippmann went on to say that the Brandeisian preoccupation with bigness directed all discussion to a dead end. Quoting Brandeis's remark that even the best organizations depend on one man, Lippmann wrote: "In this statement, you will find, I believe, one of the essential reasons why a man of Mr. Brandeis's imaginative power has turned against the modern trust. He does not believe that men can deal efficiently with the scale upon which the modern business world is organized. He has said quite frankly, that economic size is in itself a danger to democracy. This means, I take it, that American voters are not intelligent enough or powerful enough to dominate great industrial organizations." Brandeis's suggestion that corporations be limited by law to a certain size, concluded Lippmann, simply could not work. "Say today that one unit of business is impossible, tomorrow you may be confronted with an undreamt success. Here if anywhere is a place where negative prophecy is futile."

In the last analysis, Lippmann was right. Brandeis's fixation on bigness as the essence of the problem doomed to superficiality both his diagnosis and prescription. It meant that in his own thinking he was led irresistibly away from the organizational issues, where the real revolution lay. (The largest organization in which he himself ever worked full-time was the United States Supreme Court.) It meant that he must argue against vertical integration and other innovations that enhanced productive efficiency. It meant conversely that he must favor cartels and other loose horizontal combinations that protected individual businesses from competition, but that also raised prices and lowered output, thereby diminishing consumer welfare. It meant that he must promote retail price-fixing as a means of protecting small wholesalers and retailers, even though consumers again suffered. It meant, finally, that he must become in significant measure not the People's Lawyer but the spokesman of retail druggists, small shoe manufacturers, and other members of the petite bourgeoisie. These groups, like so many others throughout American history, sought to use the power of government to reverse economic forces that were threatening to render them obsolete. In Brandeis they found an effective champion.

On each of these crucial points, Brandeis's aversion to bigness simply overwhelmed his analytical powers, great though they were. Whenever he approached a conceptual breakthrough, he shrank from taking the next step. Such a step would have shown him that, in order to reach a mature understanding of the new business system, he would have to separate the political issue of bigness from the economic issue of efficiency. This he was never willing to do.

To return, finally, to the recent decanonization of Brandeis: based on my own experience and that of other Brandeis scholars, I am convinced that it came not from any debunk-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing tendencies of our time, nor from any national turn to the Right. Instead, it came from a careful examination of the primary sources. As I undertook to read the published Brandeis correspondence, to explore the voluminous Brandeis materials now available at the University of Louisville, and to look at the recently collected microfilms of Brandeis's speeches, legal briefs, and congressional testimony, I had no idea that I would discover him to have been so wrong in so many aspects of his economic thought. I believe that other scholars, writing on other aspects of his career, had the same kind of experience. Because it had been so long since anyone had looked with a careful analytical eye at the primary sources, the legend of Brandeis had grown essentially without reference to the historical record; or, in the case of some otherwise good recent biographies, such as those by Melvin Urofsky, Lewis Paper, and Philippa Strum, the legend persisted because the most pertinent questions about the available economic evidence went unasked.

The principal usefulness in rethinking the career of Brandeis lies in what it can tell us about the nature of business-government relations in the United States and the role of lawyers in managing those relations. Here Brandeis, and much of the legal profession in general, typifies the tendency of American public policy in the twentieth century to try to win some imagined contest between business and the American people. But when apparent victories against business do come, the result is often to throw out the baby with the bathwater: to reverse not only the objectionable consequences of a market economy but also the beneficial social forces deriving from overall economic growth.

A brief comparison with recent Japanese economic history will clarify my point. In most respects, Japan is not an attractive model for emulation. Japanese society as a whole is ethnocentric and often illiberal. Yet in its national economic strategy, Japan has much to teach Western nations. Ever since the departure of the American Occupation forces in 1952, the Japanese have pursued a strategy of exploiting and accelerating market forces instead of ignoring or retarding them. In both business and government, well-trained cadres of executives and bureaucrats follow routine policies of carefully analyzing technological and market trends both in Japan and in major export markets such as the United States, and of then accelerating their own industries' adaptations to these trends. The Japanese have allocated expertise, capital, and other resources to those industries with the greatest potential for growth (electronics, semiconductors), while simultaneously denying resources to industries that the elite government ministries regard as low-growth (textiles). The Americans, by contrast, have acted to slow down these shifts. We have not precisely discouraged high-growth industries so much as we have helped other, ailing industries—paying in what economists call "opportunity cost" with resources that might have been more productively employed in high-growth sectors. Through generous but sometimes misconceived unemployment and welfare laws, our policy has also tended to paralyze the remarkable labor mobility that once loomed so large in American economic successes.

All this relates to Louis D. Brandeis in that he symbolizes uncommonly well our characteristically adversarial relationship between government and big business. This relationship appears vividly in the tangles of twentieth-century antitrust policy and in such episodes as the mismanagement by both government and big business of the oil crises of the 1970s. It also appears in the frequent unwillingness of legislators to act on the clear economic principle that insulation of economic interest groups from market forces usually produces anti-competitive and anti-consumerist results, even when it is small business that is being insulated.

The sources of our adversarial relationship derive not from lawyers alone but also from a trait common to many American intellectuals and to the broad populist tradition alike: a powerful disinclination to persist in hard economic analysis that may lead away from strong ideological preference. Because of the small-is-beautiful ethos shared by so many Americans, this fact has been sometimes difficult to grasp, even for the most thoughtful and disinterested observers. After three generations of experience with the business system—experience that Brandeis himself did not have—many American intellectuals still have difficulty disentangling their aesthetic predispositions against business from their otherwise

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

democratic economics. And in an age of severe industrial challenge from abroad—specifically from the Japanese, who have ample problems of their own but who do not share this particular prejudice—it may be an issue that we cannot evade, that we must address directly.

Of course, what's good for business, whether big or small, is not always good for everybody. But sometimes it is, and we ought to learn better how to tell the difference. If we do, then we shall profit from Brandeis's great example of advocacy. All we must do is redefine the client. It must be the national interest and not that of some narrow group. With this small adjustment, tied to the needs of our own time, there is no reason why Louis D. Brandeis need be decanonized at all. Instead he might endure as he has endured: an authentic American hero, a properly revered symbol of individualism, integrity, self-reliance—and a genius at the art of winning.

A Distant Cry

LUCY SHAWGO

Walking the ravine edge,
He smoked and listened for the distant bird
Whose night cries he'd come to know,
Sensing at the same time the way
The lighted rooms cut his shadow from the house.
Even so he could almost catch
The thick sweetness of the cream
She'd be touching to her face right now
And count with her the movements of the brush
Down her long, brown hair.
He remembered the periods of their love
When he'd done this stroking for her.
Now, heavy with another child,
She'd wait only for him to bathe the boys.
Then he and she would lie, pretending sleep,
With her roundness pressed against his back
Until, her breathing calm,
He'd go outside again for smoking
And wondering whether the night bird
Shrieked loneliness or lament.

LUCY SHAWGO teaches English at Moline High School, Moline, Illinois. Her poems have appeared in the *Poetry Review* and *Negative Capability*, and they are forthcoming in the *Kenyon Review* and the *University of Windsor Review*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Decent Impersonality

CHRISTOPHER CLAUSEN

God may be no respecter of persons, meaning that he goes about his business with a certain detachment, but the new receptionist at my dentist's office has other ideas. "Are you Chris?" she asks pleasantly when I show up for my appointment.

"I'm Mr. Clausen," I answer as inoffensively as possible. But my attempt at keeping a polite distance is doomed to fail. For as long as she and I keep encountering each other, I'll always stand out in her mind as that stuffy elitist who repelled her desire to be friendly. Why use an impersonal title when you can have a nicer day by getting down to first names the first time you meet? In a society where indiscriminate informality seems the only practicable response to most people's sense of being just a number, her reaction is more natural than mine. And much more common.

As anyone over forty knows, the first-naming of strangers in public situations is only one symptom of a culture that has been getting more informal for a long time—in language, in dress, in behavior of all kinds. You can't even order a meal today without having the waitress tell you her name and ask after your health. Probably most Americans have always felt as insecure in the presence of traditional, impersonal formality as they have about their grammar. How much easier, then, to dispense with all that fustiness and do your own thing, especially if it happens to be everyone else's thing too. You can express your individuality now by wearing jeans everywhere; the whole country is doing it, except in those Eastern circles where khaki slacks are thought to be a better reflection of your personality. And you can start out on a first-name basis with anyone, no matter what he's wearing. (Salesmen and politicians used to be taught to do it, but today coaching would be supererogatory.) In fact, you almost have to address women by their first names, as AT&T's long-distance operators have begun to do, since the neologistic *Ms.* and both of the traditional feminine titles now offend substantial groups, and you have no way of knowing in advance the tastes of any particular addressee. Even the addresses on business letters now usually omit honorifics. Most newspapers today refer to men, women, and children by surname alone—a policy that can make stories about families unintelligible—apparently on the theory that equality demands uniformity.

Institutions, too, have become less formal, though the rules of the new informality may be no less rigid than the old formality. From political parties to corporations to churches, large organizations have been trying, with various degrees of success, to resist declines in popular commitment by appearing less impersonal. Huge businesses advertise their "personalized" services. ("Express yourself in a new Safari van from GMC," runs a characteristic ad. "Its personality is your personality!") Elected officials with given names of more than a syllable routinely drop them in favor of nicknames. Senator Robert Dole was someone to be approached with trepidation; Bob Dole is the pet of the news media and a serious presidential prospect. Charles Robb would never have been elected governor of Virginia if he hadn't decided to Chuck it. Jimmy Carter—well.

As the temporal realm goes, so goes the spiritual. While no one has yet publicly nicknamed the Pope (probably because each of his English names is already down to one

CHRISTOPHER CLAUSEN is a professor of English at Pennsylvania State University and author of *The Place of Poetry*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

syllable), both the Catholic and Episcopal churches have recently abandoned venerable liturgies in favor of less-distant vernacular substitutes. In conservative Protestantism, the old-fashioned emphasis on knowing the Bible backward and forward has been replaced by the necessity of having a "personal relationship" with Jesus.

All this informality militates powerfully against making any real distinctions between public and private life. By applying the standards of the latter to the former, it implies that personality and its expression are the only things to be valued in a public situation or servant. As Richard Sennett pointed out a decade ago in *The Fall of Public Man*, there used to be "a balance between public and private life, a balance between an impersonal realm in which men could invest one kind of passion and a personal realm in which they could invest another." That balance has disappeared, to the confusion of both realms. Some of the results are predictable: the counterfeits of intimacy in public situations, the synthetic emotions of the TV game show, a decline in respect for privacy, a literature that has become predominantly confessional (some would say exhibitionistic) and autobiographical, an electorate that votes for or against politicians largely on the basis of their personalities as communicated by television. Others are less obvious: a declining respect for manners and the law (which are, after all, impersonal codes designed to make life run more smoothly among people who are not intimate with one another); an increase in frustration and aggressiveness that derives from the inevitable failures of continuous self-assertion; a widespread flight from impersonal reason to supposedly more authentic emotions. These generalizations can be verified on any highway. Meanwhile, public language grows more casual and at the same time more bloated with jargon and circumlocution, as though the assertion of one's own personality requires a language of self-display that is also a language of self-importance—an incongruous marriage of pretentiousness and informality that can be found in a great deal of academic and professional writing today.

One can, to be sure, trace these developments back historically to the Romantic assertion of emotion and personality in revolt against eighteenth-century ideals of decorum and formality. *Personality* two centuries ago meant the fact of being a person, not the individual qualities that made one unique, while *informality* had the negative connotations of haphazardness and irregularity. The Romanticism of the early nineteenth century was both a rebellion against and a withdrawal from large impersonal institutions. Because the institutions of European and American society have become increasingly complicated and powerful over the last two hundred years, the Romantic impulse is still with us and has many consequences besides the ones I am describing. The electronic age, however, seems to have accelerated the tendency toward indiscriminate informality and the public exhibition of personality. The impersonal city is (or was) proverbially a freer place than the village, where everyone knows one another. The electronic "global village" offers the worst of both worlds—neither the genuine intimacy of the village nor the impersonal freedom of the city, but the illusion of knowing everything about everyone.

In politics, the pace of change from an impersonal emphasis on policies or principles to a private concentration on feelings seems likewise to have accelerated. Of course these extremes are rarely found in pure form; still, few of the people who gave Lyndon Johnson a landslide victory in the 1964 presidential election voted for him on the basis of his personal characteristics, which were in many ways less appealing than those of his opponent. In the mid-eighties, things are different. Both loyalty to a party and the habit of voting on the basis of beliefs about the world have gone into eclipse. By and large voters choose a personality and do so regardless of what that personality stands for in the way of government, if polls are to be believed. Meanwhile David Schoenbrun assures readers of *Parade* that the great world leaders he has met in a half century of journalism "were all much more human, likeable, somehow vulnerable" than their public reputations suggested, and that their "ideologies" didn't matter all that much.

Here as in other areas of life, a one-sided emphasis on personality suggests that many people have ceased to believe in anything else. The subjective world of feelings and gestures has become the only world with any significance. In this climate, a government of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

laws and not of men is an incomprehensible aspiration, while candidates for public office come more and more to be judged by the same standards as entertainers. Meaningful ritual has nearly vanished from public life, for informality even more than loss of belief is the greatest enemy of ritual. It is an extremely revealing fact about the poverty of white American public culture today that in its last three national conventions, the Democratic party has largely adopted the rituals of the black church as its own. The political effectiveness of this transformation may be doubtful, but it is hard to see where else the Democrats could have found genuine, living rituals that are not overtly nationalistic and right-wing.

The effects of compulsive informality on public life and discourse are fairly evident. Its effect on private life is no less dreary. The rituals of courtship, of the making of friends, of growing old are all in serious disrepair, so much so that one can hardly discuss them without seeming nostalgic. But let's say it anyway: one of the best arguments against having sex on the first date is that it leaves nowhere else to go, thereby short-circuiting the whole process of rituals by which true intimacy and knowledge of another person have to be created. There is a pace at which formality and reserve yield naturally to intimacy; when that pace is forced, the relationship is likely to remain permanently superficial. As for the less highly charged development of friendships, if "friendliness" and informality are demanded in all encounters, how can real friendship be distinguished from mass-produced copies? There are plenty of friendships around that remain in good shape, but the ones in which people ignore manners and continuously make demands of intimacy on each other tend to burn out fast, leaving the partners lonely and perplexed about their capacity to "relate to" other people. The constant making of emotional demands in an atmosphere of assertive intimacy and informality is, in fact, adolescent, and it is not surprising that the tone of American life—its entertainment, its standards of public behavior, its dominant emotional style—has become so identifiably adolescent in the last two decades.

In the absence of effective ritual, the desire to re-create a presumably lost sense of community has led to a jargon in which all sorts of large and diverse groupings are sentimentally described as communities—the black community, the medical community, even the intelligence community. Similarly, the language of public affairs infects private life, because no clear distinctions are perceived between the two—consider such phrases as "sexual politics" and "family management." Real community, like real intimacy, requires large areas of life that are mannerly and impersonal, in which we are not trying either to assert or to express ourselves. A paradoxical consequence of the flight from impersonality (like *formality* or *abstraction*, *impersonality* is a word with exclusively negative associations in contemporary American English) is the conformity that results from masses of people trying to assert personalities rather than convictions, personalities that have never been fully developed by the impersonal disciplines that make real individuals. Merely deciding to express oneself freely does not give one a distinct self to express; individuality, like community, is the product of a society in which the public and the private are known to be different realms.

English Victorian society, today derided as prudish and hypocritical because it kept its sex life private, was enriched by a higher degree of individuality and eccentricity than either English or American society today. That variety owed something to the fact that there were many carefully graduated levels of formality and reserve. More important than native individualism, the distinction between public and private encouraged much Victorian nonconformity to express itself in effective social and political ways rather than merely, as so often in contemporary America, in personal appearance. Highly developed individuality was and is most often a prerogative of those who belong to the upper and upper-middle classes, and one of its sources is of course the relative impunity with which members of those classes can evaluate their world. Still, it is worth noticing that the upbringing that members of those classes (especially male members) underwent in England until recently was about as impersonal and disciplined as anything one could invent. Yet one of the anomalous results of this often-brutal upbringing was a tolerance for diversity that should be the envy of any free society.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The motto of Winchester, the most ancient English public school, is "Manners makyth man"—an admirable basis for a community that is built to last.

A culture in which people speak of "personal friends" (as if there were any other kind) and demand public figures who are emotionally glib, "caring," and "vulnerable" has some serious problems with itself. Good personal relationships are impossible unless there are ways of distinguishing them from significant relationships that aren't personal; public life is stultified if the impersonal is either rejected or made to bear all the emotional freight of personal intimacy. A large, diverse society can't govern itself, or even live in peace, without a decent impersonality in many of the affairs of life. Impersonality simply means: my behavior toward you has nothing to do with those qualities that make you unique, nor do I want you to share those qualities with me; I am treating you with the same courtesy I would accord anyone who happened to assume the role in my life that you have temporarily assumed. Our personalities are not on trial here. Let's behave with dignity and efficiency, making no demands on each other that do not grow out of the purposes that brought us together.

Because so much of the important business of life—birth, death, warfare, employment; choosing wise leaders, buying a house, selling a car—has little to do with the personalities of the people involved, an exclusively personal approach to life is frustrating and finally impossible. It also lessens freedom and variety if we are forever judging others—and they us—in an emotional hot tub where reserve is suspect and privacy unattainable. If I insist that every encounter should satisfy my private need for emotional communion, I make impossible demands on others and reduce the diversity I am prepared to accept in them by the very act of refusing to recognize that they may have wholly different tastes. When everyone is a first name and intimacy is the sought-for ideal in all situations, both intimacy and judgment become harder to reach than ever; hypocrisy or disappointment inevitably takes their place most of the time. A culture that cannot distinguish relationships that demand civility from those that demand personal revelation is unlikely to cope very well with the serious crises of life, whether public or private, political or marital. That, and not mere conservatism toward the usages of the past, is the best reason for insisting that strangers not presume on one's first name.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gershom Scholem

ADA RAPOPORT-ALBERT

Some years ago there came into my possession an offprint of one of the early studies in the Kabbalah by Gershom Scholem, who is generally acknowledged to be the modern era's greatest scholar of Judaism and who died in Jerusalem in February 1982. This was his article on the Spanish Kabbalist Abraham ben Eli'ezer he-Levi, which appeared in Jerusalem some two years after Scholem's emigration from Germany to Eretz Yisra'el and his installation, first as librarian at the nascent Jewish National Library and soon after as a lecturer at the newly founded Hebrew University in Jerusalem. On the offprint was a dedication written in Hebrew in Scholem's hand. Translated into English it reads as follows: "Greetings to you from your faithful pupil Gershom Scholem the Jerusalemite" (*birkat Shalom lecha mi-talmidecha ha-ne'eman Gershom Shalom ish Yerushalayim*). I have often wondered to whom this dedication might have been addressed.

Scholem's description of himself as "the Jerusalemite" seemed to suggest not only that he was relatively new to this title and proud of it, which of course he was, but also that he was addressing someone who had not earned it. This could conceivably have been a resident of, say, Tel Aviv, such as H. N. Bialik, the Hebrew national poet who had settled there in 1924. He was twenty-four years Scholem's senior, had known him since his own days in Germany, and enjoyed Scholem's continued respect and admiration. But the phrase "greetings to you," though chosen not least because it contained an allusion to the Hebrew form of Scholem's own name, a literary conceit that he could hardly resist, sounded as though it was directed at someone who was much farther away. Moreover, the posture of "faithful pupil" adopted by Scholem on this occasion did not quite fit his relationship with Bialik. He signed a letter to Bialik written in the same year (and again, with the irresistible pun on his own name) with the Hebrew equivalent of "yours most respectfully," the tone of which is clearly different.

Other men who were older than Scholem and influential on his development in the preceding decade, such as Zalman Shazar and S. Y. Agnon, had by that time themselves settled in Jerusalem and were likewise not quite Scholem's teachers, but more his friends. Martin Buber came to mind as a possible candidate—he was still living in Germany (until 1938) and was considerably senior to Scholem in years as well as through his international reputation as a Jewish intellectual and Zionist leader. He had taken the young Scholem under his wing, publishing, between 1916 and 1923, some of Scholem's earliest translations and other writings in *Der Jude*, which Buber edited. But Scholem's admiration for Buber was never uncritical, and it is extremely difficult to conceive of him, let alone imagine him conceiving of himself, as Buber's "faithful pupil" even as early as 1925.

In recent years, since Scholem's turn to autobiographical writings, which culminated with his autobiography, *Von Berlin nach Jerusalem*, Frankfurt, 1977 (English translation, *From Berlin to Jerusalem*, New York, 1980), I have begun to suspect that the offprint may have been dedicated, not to any elusive "master" figure whom Scholem may have regarded as his intellectual or moral mentor, but rather to a humbler personality. It might have been someone who was genuinely acknowledged as of crucial educational importance, perhaps

ADA RAPOPORT-ALBERT, a lecturer in the department of Hebrew and Jewish studies at University College London, is completing a book about the history of Hasidism.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one of his two teachers of Talmud, Dr. Isaac Bleichrode in Berlin or Dr. Heinrich Ehrentreu in Munich, described in *Von Berlin* as "the two teachers of my youth whom I remember with the greatest gratitude." Ehrentreu was the better known Talmudic scholar of the two. He was in Germany in 1925 (until his death in 1928) and could have been the addressee. But I would like to think that the man of whom Scholem saw himself a "faithful pupil" was Dr. Bleichrode, "hardly what one would call a great scholar" but nonetheless "a wonderful teacher, one who was able to elucidate a page of Talmud" and whose "pedagogical genius caught fire precisely from us who were alienated from Judaism." Scholem speaks of Bleichrode consistently in the most respectful and affectionate terms. In the expanded Hebrew version of his autobiography (*mi-Berlin Li Yerushalayim*, Tel Aviv, 1982), Scholem refers to Bleichrode several times by the traditional rabbinic title of "my master and teacher," which signals the pupil's deference to his teacher; and he tells the moving story of how, in the early 1930s, at the age of sixty-five, Bleichrode immigrated to Jerusalem and attended Scholem's *Zohar* classes at the Hebrew University. The students were fascinated by the modest old man who had joined their ranks, and according to one of them—Fania Freud, later to become Mrs. Scholem—they were puzzled by their teacher's extraordinary patience and courtesy in replying to his rather elementary questions. At the end of the class Scholem introduced the old man and announced: "What is mine and yours is his," acknowledging their collective debt to Bleichrode in the words of the tannaitic scholar Akiva, who recorded in this way his gratitude to his wife for enabling him to become a scholar and thus indirectly bestowing scholarship upon all his disciples as well.

Whether or not Bleichrode was the original owner of my offprint, and regardless of the fact that, in his limited but significant way, he was Scholem's first guide to the world of the Jewish sources, what emerges clearly from all this speculation is precisely the absence of any obvious claimant to the title of Scholem's teacher in the fuller sense of the word. None of the people with whom he studied during his academic training at the universities of Berlin, Jena, Bern, and Munich—either in mathematics, his original field, or in philosophy and Semitics in which he obtained his doctorate under Clemens Bäumker and Fritz Hommel—had exerted such crucial influence on his intellectual development. He was bored by many of them, positively repelled by some, and achieved at best a decent working relationship with a handful of respected professionals. He learned from books, not from teachers, and this was true of his mathematical studies as well as of his study of philosophy and, ultimately, the Kabbalah, though it was only in this latter field that there were no teachers to be found.

To the extent that Scholem ever did adopt something of the posture of the pupil in the most profound intellectual sense, this was in regard only to his friend Walter Benjamin. Both his autobiography and the account of his friendship with Benjamin, entitled *Walter Benjamin—The Story of a Friendship* (German original, *Walter Benjamin—die Geschichte einer Freundschaft*, Frankfurt, 1975), offer an abundance of insights into this aspect of the complicated relationship between them. They range from such confessions by Scholem as: "He was probably the only person toward whom I was almost invariably polite" and "In the course of time his speech greatly influenced me, and I adopted a good number of his mannerisms" to Scholem's celebration of every sign of approval from Benjamin, particularly when this was offered in response to his own insights into Benjamin's thoughts, which were so often impenetrable to others. Scholem also made several stark statements of admiration, such as: "Benjamin was simply of a different caliber," or "In Benjamin I met for the first time a man with an utterly original mind, one that immediately appealed to me and moved me."

Some time ago, in a newspaper interview with Fania Scholem, his widow, I was delighted to read her observations that confirm this impression completely. In reply to a question about her late husband's friendship with and loyalty to the man who, at least in some ways, had let him down, she said:

> Walter Benjamin was older than him by five years, and Gershom Scholem never outgrew this age gap. For him, Walter Benjamin was "senior" while he himself remained "junior." Gershom was 17 or 19 years old when they met [in fact he was seventeen and a half]. At that age five years do make a big

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

difference, and this is how it remained. He held the personality of Walter Benjamin in great esteem, and always said that he was the most acute mind of our century.

In fact, from Scholem's own account, it would seem that a certain "despotic trait" in Benjamin's character demanded this kind of deference from all his friends. He "laid claim to unconditional intellectual leadership" and was liable to sever long-standing friendships if he sensed any resistance to this claim. Although, as he remarks, Scholem was subjected to this "despotism" only infrequently and subtly, he clearly satisfied Benjamin's requirements to qualify as his friend.

If this was the nearest that Scholem ever got to the posture of discipleship, it was not a posture in which he was naturally comfortable. His sense of Benjamin's intellectual seniority was accompanied almost from the start by reservations regarding his friend's moral, and ultimately even intellectual, integrity. Himself a victim, at that time, of his own uncompromising consistency between intellectual commitment and practical conduct in daily life, having been expelled from home and cut off by his father at the age of twenty for voicing his opposition to bourgeois Jewish-German patriotism during the First World War, Scholem could not but disapprove of the discrepancy between Benjamin's spiritual nobility and the "impure," relative morality that he practiced in daily life. This was manifest, for example, in Benjamin's financial exploitation of his parents, despite (or, as he argued with Scholem unconvincingly in his own defense, because of) his contempt for the bourgeois world.

To Benjamin and his wife Dora, Scholem's scrupulousness in such matters seemed a touch too wholesome, too pious and naive. Scholem, on the other hand, wrote in *Walter Benjamin—The Story of a Friendship:* "In Benjamin's relationship with things of daily life there existed a strictly amoral element that I could not come to terms with." He was clearly alarmed by Benjamin's declarations that "people like us had obligations only to our own kind and not to the rules of a society we repudiated," which he found tinted with "a liberal dash of Nietzsche" and could not accept. Scholem's own imbued sense of bourgeois morality was prompted by a commitment, albeit outside any formal religious framework, to "the supremacy of the religious sphere of revelation" and the "acceptance of the Ten Commandments as an absolute value in the moral world."

In a similar vein, many years later, at Scholem's instigation Benjamin was financially sponsored by J. L. Magnes on behalf of the Hebrew University to undertake the study of the Hebrew language in preparation for his anticipated appointment as a lecturer in Jerusalem. Benjamin took the money, spent it, but continued to defer his Hebrew studies until it became clear even to Scholem that, for an inextricable mixture of personal and ideological reasons, he had not the slightest intention of honoring his agreement with Magnes. Although ambivalent about this project from the start, Scholem was naturally disappointed with the failure of Benjamin's immigration to Eretz Yisra'el to materialize, but this was almost overshadowed by his personal embarrassment and moral distaste for his friend's prevarications over the study of Hebrew for which he had been fully paid in good faith.

On a different plane, Benjamin's turn to Marxism appeared to Scholem as intellectually dishonest or, at best, a self-delusion. While still confident of his original perception of Benjamin as an intellectual giant of uniquely original insight, he wrote to him critically in 1931:

> Since my first acquaintance with more or less extensive samples from your pen . . . in the spirit of dialectical materialism, I have realised ever more clearly and distinctly that with this production you are engaging in a singularly intensive kind of self-deception. . . . Though in recent years you have tried—frantically, if you will pardon the expression—to present your insights, some of them very far-reaching, in a phraseology that is as close as can be to the Communist kind, there is . . . an astonishing incompatibility and unconnectedness between your real and your pretended modes of thought. You gain your insights not through strict application of a materialistic method but quite independently of it (at best) or (at worst, as in some writings of the last two years) by playing with the ambiguities and dissonances of this method.

True, he never outgrew the five years' gap between them, but Scholem was clearly aware that, while his own life was progressing, perhaps a little unexpectedly, in a purposeful and harmoniously constant course,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that of his friend had become distorted, disharmonious, and ultimately desperate, both intellectually and in his personal affairs. From Scholem's perspective, this failure of Benjamin's immense capabilities to reach full realization was owed as much to external distractions—such as his association with Brecht and his circle, his affiliation with the Frankfurt *Institut fuer Sozialforschung* (which was at least in part dictated by the urgent need for financial support), and his emotional entanglement with the Latvian revolutionary Asja Lacis—as to those internal flaws of character that may have exposed him to such distractions.

Of these flaws Scholem was aware, not only with the hindsight of Benjamin's despair and suicide, or even his conversion to Marxism with which Scholem was in such profound disagreement, but from the earliest days of their friendship, when he and Benjamin were so exhilaratingly united by a common insight and a wide range of shared intellectual preoccupations. His disapproval of the amoral and decadent traits in Benjamin's personality extended to even such trivial matters as Benjamin's passionate delight in the external appearance of books. Scholem, himself a bibliophile and a bibliographer of the first order, was soberly disdainful of such aesthetic raptures. All these differences qualified Scholem's admiration for the man and enabled him, as he noted as early as 1918, to find "the locus from which I can tacitly resist him in my inner affairs."

Scholem was, then, no more a "faithful pupil" than was suggested, a little coyly, perhaps, by his own generous turn of phrase. But he was certainly a teacher in the fullest sense of the word, not only to the relatively small cluster of professional Kabbalistic scholars he trained, but also the wider community of academic students of Judaism, both within and without the Jewish world, as well as, perhaps unwittingly, and not uncontroversially, a teacher to the nation of Israel as a whole.

The small group of Scholem's immediate pupils, the oldest of them now retired, the youngest in their late thirties and forties, have come to dominate the field of studies that he created. They are all stamped with his personal mark; they are his "products." Most of them had served a long and tortuous apprenticeship with him, and their emergence as full-fledged scholars in their own right was not always free from tension, and never really complete, not even when they were proclaiming, as some of them did, their independence or divergence from his views. As anyone must have experienced who ever attempted to write about any aspect of the Jewish mystical tradition, Gershom Scholem's figure hovered behind one's shoulder, as it were, scrutinizing every word, so that the work was always directed at him above all, as the first and last arbiter of plausibility and truth. At conferences and seminars, when a speaker, however eminent, would address himself to a relevant topic with Scholem present in the audience, all eyes would be permanently fixed upon him to gauge his response from his facial expressions, which usually gave it away vividly and unequivocally. All this, of course, had a certain inhibiting effect. But on the whole it has secured the preservation of exacting standards of scholarship in a field that, verging as it does on the occult, the irrational, and the emotional forces within the spiritual life, has always attracted charlatanism and fraud, and was traditionally shunned by the Jewish scholarly establishment.

At the same time, Scholem was both generous and honorable in acknowledging his students' achievements, even when they conflicted with his own work. He was magnanimous, and movingly tender, in his tribute to one of his pupils with whom he did not always see eye to eye. This was the late J. G. Weiss, a most original and talented, if controversial, scholar of Hasidism, who became professor of Jewish Studies at London University and died tragically in 1969. Scholem dedicated to his memory a seminal essay on the neutralization of the messianic ideal in early Hasidism, and preceded it with an appreciation of Weiss's contribution to the field.

Another of Scholem's pupils, J. Ben-Schlomo, now professor of philosophy at the University of Tel Aviv, discussing Scholem's identification of the sixteenth-century Safed Kabbalist Moses Cordovero as the most systematic exponent of pantheistic tendencies in the Kabbalah, recalled not long ago in this connection:

> In the doctorate on Cordovero's theory of the divinity which I wrote under his supervision I presented a thesis which ran contrary to his own on the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

question of panentheism. Throughout the period of his supervision Scholem never criticized me on this subject by as much as a word, and did not attempt to change my opinion. Only in his examination report on the doctorate he remarked that it was possible to rewrite it in its entirety, deploying all its arguments to prove the opposite view. However, when he came to collect in one volume all his entries on the Kabbalah from the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, he requested that the entry on Cordovero should be written by me and appear under my name. He stated his own view briefly, in the entry entitled "Kabbalah and Pantheism" on which was based the analysis which I presented above. I would like to add only that in the meantime I have become convinced that on the question of Cordovero's panentheism he was right, not I.

Scholem's readiness to stand corrected by the evidence (though not necessarily by the interpretation of the evidence, and certainly not by argumentation that claims to "transcend" the evidence) produced by others was matched only by his readiness to stand corrected by new evidence that he produced himself. He admitted his own errors frankly and displayed his new findings with the kind of impatience that is more commonly reserved by scholars for the exposure of their colleagues' mistakes. This was, of course, one of the graces that came with masterly erudition, clarity of purpose, and an unshaken belief in the validity and importance of the exercise.

As a teacher of Jewish mysticism at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Scholem occupied a unique and powerful position. He was the creator of a new academic discipline in a newly founded academic institution. He was the first to map out the geographical and chronological outlines of the field; he identified the main currents that flow within it and introduced into this new area of investigation the methodology that has become, not least under his influence, one of the hallmarks of the Hebrew University's Institute of Jewish Studies. This has been the strictly textual, philological method that found such meticulous expression in his own work, based on the painstaking examination of thousands of Kabbalistic books and manuscripts. He subjected, for the first time, these often obscure and neglected texts to rigorous analysis, occasionally with sensational results. An example of this is his resolution of the age-old debate, ridden with tendentious suppressions or perversions of the evidence, about the alleged antiquity of the *Zohar*—the most influential creation of the classical Kabbalah, which Scholem proved once and for all to have been written pseudepigraphically, in an anachronistic Aramaic medium, by the thirteenth-century Spanish Kabbalist Moses de Leon.

This was, incidentally, the most celebrated example of Scholem's willing submission to the evidence at the cost—if it was ever perceived as such—of proving himself wrong. He began his investigation of the *Zohar* with a ceremonious declaration of his intention to prove the antiquity of the work against the rumors, which had been circulating for centuries since the sudden "discovery" of the "*Zohar* literature" in the late thirteenth century, that this allegedly tannaitic work (that is, before 200 C.E.) was in fact a thirteenth-century fabrication by Moses de Leon. These rumors had been fostered by all those who, for a variety of apologetic reasons through the ages, were extremely hostile to the Kabbalah. It is understandable that Scholem, singlehandedly concerned to redeem the discipline from undignified obscurity, was determined to dispel them once and for all and to establish the *Zohar*, and the Kabbalah, as a legitimate and integral part of the Jewish tradition. Some years later he managed brilliantly to prove the opposite—namely, that the "*Zohar* literature" is essentially a book and that Moses de Leon was, after all, its author. He succeeded, nevertheless, in investing the subject with academic respectability and in establishing its legitimacy (there are those who claim that he had overreached his mark); and he effected his scholarly U-turn without a trace of embarrassment.

From the vantage point of the latter part of the twentieth century, this nineteenth-century method of textual analysis may seem old-fashioned if not downright pedestrian. It has indeed been remarked that Scholem and his "school" have been rigidly immune to changing fashions of historical methodology and have shown little awareness of the growing sophistication afforded by the convergence of historical research with the social sciences, linguistics, literary criticism, and other disciplines in recent decades. It is, however, hardly necessary to point out that in the case of the academic study of the Kabbalah, which began with Scholem and is not yet more than half a century old—where there are no dictionaries or concor-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dances or any other reference works to speak of, where there are still many more unpublished than published sources, and where most of the published texts are in a state of disarray—this nineteenth-century method is appropriate. In Scholem's hands the method was deployed in a most sophisticated way. This method is still needed today to do work that the nineteenth century had accomplished, if not exhausted, in parallel fields of research. Moreover, the claim implicit in all his scholarly works is that of pursuing with this method nothing less than the plain objective truth. Naive as that may sound to those whose hearing has been blunted by vulgar religious or political rhetoric, it is a noble claim, albeit one ridden with inner tensions. Scholem was fully conscious of the method's inherent limitations. His critique of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* school of historiography, which formed an important part of his own intellectual inheritance, exposes the inner contradictions, the political and philosophical biases that distorted the "detached" view of Judaism so rigorously offered by this school, with inevitably self-destructive consequences. But the critique espouses the method of this school, liberated, as Scholem clearly believed, through Zionism from the apologetic and rationalistic constraints that prompted it to use this "post mortem" approach to the study of Jewish tradition.

The other charge commonly leveled against this method is that of its propensity for antiquarianism or a parochial submersion in a sea of factual detail to the point of losing sight of the general ideational outlines and significance of the larger picture. This charge is best answered in Scholem's own words when he defines, in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, "the task of investigating what is alive in Judaism." Scholem believes the task must be undertaken by the present generation of Jewish historians, "instead of an antiquarian history of literature," which was the product of the nineteenth-century school:

> By genuine scholarly immersion into facts and circumstances we may be able to recognize and reconstruct the whole from its smallest parts. Such an immersion must not shrink from the insight expressed in the magnificent saying ascribed to Aby Warburg: *Der liebe Gott lebt im detail* (it is in minutiae that God can be found).

Scholem's own achievement in drawing the vitality, the general features and ramifications of his subject out of detailed philological investigations bears glorious witness to the truth contained in this statement.

Indirectly, of course, Scholem was *the* teacher of Jewish mysticism, messianism, gnosticism, indeed in some cases, ironically enough, of Judaism itself. He became the teacher to thousands of students the world over who were attracted to a subject that has become, under his influence, increasingly central to the study of Judaism and the history of religion generally. In Jewish mysticism, from its origins to its latest manifestations in recent times, Scholem identified the inner core of Judaism, its source of vitality and powers of regeneration in the face of both physical calamity and spiritual petrification. It was the mystical tradition that preserved the nation's creative religious impulses and authentic (often mythical) perception of God, as against the legalistic excesses of the Ha'achists and the ever-increasing abstraction of God by the philosophers. This presentation of the Jewish mystical tradition has brought about a complete revaluation of the entire course of Jewish history. That which nineteenth-century historiography had dismissed as marginal, incoherent, alien to the true spirit of Judaism, or a pathological growth within it was suddenly, and very forcefully, brought to the fore as both central and essential, a coherent and organic development within the main body of the nation. There is not a single branch of the study of Judaism, Jewry, and its contacts with other cultures that has not had to look at itself afresh through this new perspective.

Scholem's growing international reputation as the most distinguished Jewish scholar of the day coincided with—was prompted by and itself prompted—the Western revival of interest in irrational, mystical, and sectarian religious practice. Scholem himself was ambivalent, to say the least, about the authenticity of this phenomenon. He believed its prevalence among the Jewish youth, both in Israel and outside it, to be negative and to signify their rejection of secular, materialistic values, as well as their total estrangement from traditional Jewish values, including Zionism. In an interview he gave in Israel in 1974—one of his first autobiographical exposures—he recalled his impression (otherwise wholeheart-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

edly favorable) of the Beat poet Allen Ginsberg, one of the earlier followers of this trend, who once paid Scholem a visit in Jerusalem:

> He said: "I'm going to India for ten years"—and three months later he was out of India. In a person of that sort there is a kind of reaction to the real state of desolation in which American Jews live. But there are people of that sort right here in Israel, too.

It was Scholem's stature as the foremost historian of the nation that aroused in some the expectation, and in others the fear, that he would also don the mantle of spiritual guide, the prophet to the nation that had lost its immediate understanding of its past and was seeking reassurances about its capacity for survival and the purpose of its future. As Arnaldo Momigliano has remarked in this journal, in an article titled "History in an Age of Ideologies":

> Ordinary religious, philosophic and moral tenets have been losing authority. It has therefore become customary to ask the historian to provide guidance for the future development of mankind. It has also become common to ask the historian to provide quasi-religious or quasi-moral interpretations of the past that are quite beyond the abilities of any historian qua historian. . . . In the ensuing confusion it would be easy to claim that the historian's task is not to give objective information about the past but to provide a message for the future. This is exactly the position preferred by those who define history as a branch of rhetoric and deny the historian's ability to discover the past, yet expect from him a blueprint for the future.

Scholem was attacked, with varying degrees of sophistication and venom, by a succession of religious-fundamentalist, as well as rationalistic-apologetic, scholars of Judaism. They attacked him for promoting a personal, anarchic, if not nihilistic, version of Judaism and presenting it as a program for its future survival in the guise of objective scholarship. Objective history, they claimed, did not, could not, or should not exist if it threatened to undermine accepted notions of traditional Judaism.

Scholem's investigations of the mid-seventeenth-century messianic heresy of Sabbatai Sevi, first presented in the essay "Redemption Through Sin," then in a chapter of his book *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (where it occupied equal space and position of prominence to that allocated to such "legitimate" topics as the medieval German Hasidim, the sixteenth-century Lurianic school, and the eighteenth-century Beshtian Hasidic movement), and finally in his monumental book *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah*, provoked the wrath of the defenders of traditional Judaism, both in Israel and abroad. They saw Scholem's very concern with the figure of a *false* messiah as subversive, considering that this messiah had led at least some of his followers into antinomianism, culminating in apostasy to Islam and later on to Catholicism as well. The new light that Scholem shed on the sheer scope of the Sabbatian movement—on its theological ingenuity and depth as well as its links with perfectly indigenous Kabbalistic traditions on which it fed most directly—was seen by his outraged critics as an advocacy of the path of Zionist redemption through the sin of secularism, for which the Sabbatians had provided him with such a colorful metaphor.

On the other hand, those who looked to Scholem for precisely this kind of program for the survival of Judaism in a secular age were impatient with him (though without irreverence) and frustrated by his "teasing" reluctance to pronounce more explicitly than he did on the issues at stake. Scholem did venture occasionally into the realm of metaphysical speculation, but his authority was decidedly that of a historian, not a metaphysician. To this day, all the attempts to challenge his presentation of Judaism as a dynamic plurality of phenomena rather than a monolithic and unchanging coherence have failed. And the leveling against him of the charge of "relativizing" Jewish values and legitimizing all manner of deviant behavior has also failed because of the authors' inability to recognize the difference between the craft of the historian and that of the rhetorician.

Scholem's objectivity was challenged explicitly and in principle by those who were not able or willing to examine the evidence on which he based his case. (Of these, Baruch Kurzweil was perhaps the most outspoken, but he was preceded and followed by others.) Scholem's objectivity was questioned implicitly (and without ulterior motive) in a more recent, pioneering study of him that treated his findings as the vehicle primarily for the application of his ready-made model of Jewish history.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(This study is David Biale's *Gershom Scholem —Kabbalah and Counter-History.*)

In Scholem's defense, I cite once again Professor Momigliano:

> The choice of the subjects for research and teaching is naturally personal and subjective and may well depend on whatever is left of our religious or philosophical or moral convictions. What matters is that once the research or the teaching starts, we must be guided by the evidence we are given or are able to discover. The motives for starting a piece of research must not affect the conduct of the research itself.

Any attempt—and there will be many—to identify the conscious and unconscious influences on Scholem's interpretation of Judaism and the motives that lay behind his scholarly preoccupations must recognize these terms of reference. Indeed, Momigliano himself has suggested elsewhere that conflicting tendencies within German Romanticism must be seen as the background for Scholem's initial concern with esoteric material and his conviction of its centrality to the Jewish tradition, as well as his rejection of the nineteenth-century "Science of Judaism" heritage. But these suggestions are accompanied by the acknowledgment that, once he chose to devote his life to the study of the Kabbalah, Scholem banished from his work all traces of romantic mysticism (to which he was consciously averse), and his scholarly judgments were derived from the evidence alone.

These judgments are now becoming open to challenge and revision through the growing accessibility of the sources for which Scholem was largely responsible and which his students are concerned to secure. No doubt this process has his blessing still.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Books

History According to Saint Joan

G. R. ELTON

WOMEN, HISTORY AND THEORY: THE ESSAYS OF JOAN KELLY. *By Joan Kelly. University of Chicago Press. $18.*

The turmoil in the universities in the later 1960s produced, among other things, an addiction to so-called minority history—history seen through the eyes of minority groups and rewritten to suit their supposed needs and interests. Of the specialties then introduced, only women's history has survived as a serious academic preoccupation. Neither gays' nor blacks' history, for instance, ever settled into a regular part of the curriculum, whereas women's history has become an accepted feature in many American institutions and on publishers' lists. Nor is this surprising. Women, after all, are the only human minority that forms a majority of the population, and—however fiercely feminists may deny this—they started from a position of power not available to other groups. The men whose supposed distortion of history they attacked could hardly avoid frequent contact with them. Moreover, men (especially American men) had long regarded women with a mixture of respect and apprehension, which reflected their understanding of female power and induced them to accept the often unrestrained criticism hurled at them. The common reaction of the liberal mind is to feel guilty when accused, and most historians, especially in the United States, are of a liberal mind. Women's history also benefited from the contemporaneous and powerful swing toward social history, as it is called—the somewhat static study of social groupings in the past and their relationships to one another. Thus women's history had little difficulty in achieving academic recognition.

The combination of passionate assault and conscience-stricken response produced, predictably, a state of affairs in which women's history has received little serious criticism. No one will doubt that the history of women merits as much attention as the history of any collection of human beings, but it has to be said that its claims to scholarly validity have in the main been taken for granted too readily. The issue is not whether women's history should be written, but whether what is being written is good. The publication of Joan Kelly's essays offers an opportunity to review the quality and accuracy of the history purveyed—that is to say, of history as it is being shaped not by women, or indeed men, but by feminists. I well know the risks one runs in applying the normal critical standards to people who write with passion and for a cause. Such people cling together, praising the members of the group and deeply resenting anyone who looks at their premises and performances from outside the charmed circle. It will be interesting to see whether women's history has grown up sufficiently to permit a voice to one who approves its aims but is not committed to its current results.

On the face of it, the test case of Joan Kelly looks a little feeble. The book consists of a mere five essays, of which only two discuss plain historical problems; the remaining three attempt to set up a general theory of feminist history. Kelly, who died in 1982 at the age of fifty-four, never produced a vast quantity of

G. R. ELTON is Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge University. He is the author of, among other publications, *Reform and Reformation*, *Policy and Police*, and *England Under the Tudors*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

historical research. Before she turned to women's history—and it should be noted that the title of this book disguises the fact that several earlier essays are excluded—she wrote a book on Leon Battista Alberti, a relatively minor figure in the Italian Renaissance, as well as a few pieces on topics in Renaissance humanism, all of which showed her to be a reasonably competent product of Garrett Mattingly's teaching at Columbia University. She had a well-developed social conscience and actively hated the war in Vietnam, so that the years 1968–69 naturally enough found her joining the students' rebellion from the professorial camp. Round about 1970 she turned to feminism and was received there as a valuable recruit and potential leader. Her chief contribution, we are told in the lengthy prefatory matter in this volume, consisted of the discovery that women's history could provide a "vantage point" (the term seized upon by her followers) from which to inspect the whole of history. What, therefore, makes this small collection of five articles worth serious consideration is the opinion, expressed in the prefaces, that after her conversion and owing to her proclamation of a "theory" she acquired the status of a true prophetess in the movement. Insiders regard her work as exceptionally important in the advance of women's history.

The term *prophetess* is strictly applicable. In her own introduction—a third piece added to the preliminary matter—Kelly tells us how she came to turn to feminist history. There she makes it plain that what happened resembled a religious experience much more than the working out of a rational train of thought. She did not surrender easily. Saul had his revelation in a flash on the road to Damascus; Kelly, more resistent, underwent a four-hour harangue from a dedicated missionary (Gilda Lerner), whose preaching prepared her for "the most exciting intellectual adventure" she had ever had. But by her own account that adventure was not exactly intellectual; she describes it as resembling the experience of adolescence when despairing confusion retreats before a "restoration," an instinctive trust in a new dogma revealed to the recipient. No new reading, she says, no archival find, no additional knowledge contributed to the process. In fact, what by her own description had happened to her was a form of what since has come to be known as being born again. Perhaps she was readier than some to undergo this rebirth, having acquired all the conventional liberal reactions to the events of the day and, as a species of Marxist, already being accustomed to following a faith.

Feminism of this kind is thus manifestly a form of religion, not a rational tool of historical analysis, even though a critique of the history written under its banner must apply rational standards. Adherence to it involves conversion, the comfort of the sect, and proselytizing; the end sought is salvation. Once received into the faith, Kelly became a typical convert—more zealous even than existing followers of the spiritual teaching on offer. Her sadly early death (a victim of cancer, a charismatic disease in such circles) made it likely that from prophetess she would be promoted to sainthood, and the manner in which the two prefaces speak of her indicate that she has already been beatified. She is presented to us in the language that forms the dogmatic framework of feminism—male oppression, female virtue, free sexuality, heightened consciousness, and so forth. Her special role is defined: it was she who transformed articles of belief into positive action. "For Kelly," we are told, "politics was everywhere: it involved more than active opposition to economic injustice, sexism, racism, and the hierarchical relationships in the larger society and in the university; it involved both writing and teaching." (It is not clear whether the disconcertingly anti-climactical structure of this sentence was intentional.) She receives adulatory praise for organizing seminars and conferences and for adding an awareness of class relations to the understanding of the gender-based oppression suffered by women. In short, she is seen as the active, even activist, prophetess the movement needed; to the outsider she therefore represents a good guide to the sort of intellectual standards in the production of women's history that the movement approves of. It should be added that her own writing remained free of that stridency born of hatred which one otherwise encounters so frequently; if it were not for one citation from her private diary, in which she "passionately" prayed for "an end to patriarchy," one would not understand the charisma attaching to her. But it was clearly circumambient.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Naturally this suffices for the believer. The nonbeliever, willing to be persuaded, must ask whether the substance of thought and learning behind the charisma makes Kelly's kind of feminism a sound foundation for women's history. She herself defines that compound as possessing "a dual role: to restore women to history and to restore our history to women." There is a characteristic woolliness about this phrase. Women have never been omitted from history; what Kelly meant (as the rest of the essay shows) is to write history not only exclusively from a woman's standpoint but also as though only women had mattered in the history of human experience. It is this desire that fueled her claim to attention—her discovery of a "theory" that allegedly opens one's eyes to an entirely new, and entirely true, way of interpreting the past. The search for a "theory" constitutes one of the more aberrant preoccupations of American historians, anxious not to be laughed at by the more obtuse practitioners of the social sciences, and Kelly's "theory" possesses the qualities generally demanded by women and men alike who have surrendered to this quest: it is very simple, it is very absolute, and it precedes the actual work of historical research. What this "theory" proposes is that a supposedly general and conventional view of the past turns out to be unusable when the fortunes of women, as a human group, are given proper attention: the world turns upside down. At first sight one cannot quite believe that Kelly is serious about the supposed conventional interpretation that she attacks; she seems to suppose that male historians all underwrite the most simplistic of progress doctrines according to which humanity has steadily and by stages moved from barbarism to a condition of freedom and self-fulfillment. This, Kelly maintains, holds good if you confine history to men, but in her view men achieved their progress by oppressing and exploiting women, so that every stage of their advancement equaled a stage in the downgrading of women. The first part of the world which is turned upside down is paradise, in which Eve was perfectly happy before Adam provoked the Fall; and while he has been struggling upward ever since, he has done so only by treading on Eve's head.

Kelly works out her theory of step-by-step decline in the essays entitled "The Social Realities of the Sexes: Methodological Implications of Women's History," "The Doubled Vision of Feminist Theory," and "Family and Society"; substance is adduced in two historical essays entitled "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" and "Early Feminist Theory and the *Querelles des Femmes*." Unhappily, in this limited corpus of work, the theoretical discussions, apart from being tendentious, can only be called jejune, while the historical investigations are flawed in just about every particular.

It is really quite astonishing to find a historian in the later twentieth century who can suppose that prevalent teaching concentrates on simple notions of progress and identifies (so Kelly says) three nodal points in this march through time: Periclean Athens, the Italian Renaissance, and the French Revolution. Who on earth thinks thus? The answer is that Marx did and that Kelly, enemy to patriarchy, unhappily chose to exempt that quintessential patriarch and oppressor of women from the curse of Adam. Conceptually, she stopped somewhere in the middle of the nineteenth century, and it cannot encourage belief in the new theory to find that the enemy that has been overthrown has been dead and moldering for decades. The point comes out most starkly in the essay on "Family and Society," an attempt to link the history of the family (as women's history) to the consequences of class war. Admittedly addressed to students, it employs a breathtaking oversimplification at every point touched, using a totally unsophisticated version of the Marxist sequence of dominant classes to move from "feudalism" to "capitalism," from "preindustrial" to "industrial" and so to the bright hopes of the present, with a proletariat of women about to save the world. Along the way we learn such new marvels as that private property, as a concept and a fact, emerged in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries during an alleged transition to what are called "state-organised" societies, and we get a sadly outdated child's guide to the Industrial Revolution. Occasional good insights come as a welcome relief but tend to vanish in the general morass of textbook history at the "world civ." level or below it. In all that range of history which she here tries to make her province, Kelly's knowledge and reading were strictly minimal. For example, she offers

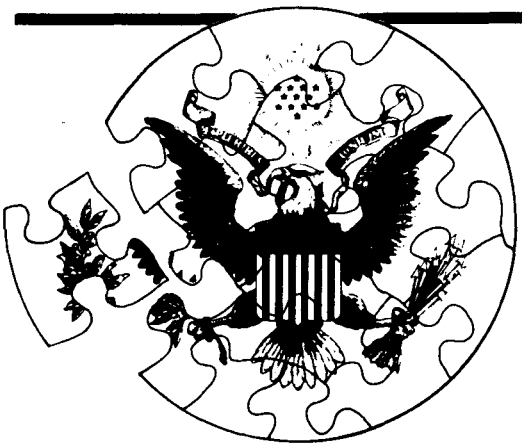
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an array of confident assertions—some highly doubtful, more still certainly wrong—about medieval society (a thousand years of experiences varying enormously in time and place); for all this the reader is calmly referred to one of G. C. Coulton's compilations and to Henri Pirenne's general history. Coulton's work appeared in 1928; Pirenne's history, first published in 1936, was written in an internment camp in the last year of the First World War; here they are cited, misleadingly, from reprints dated 1960 and 1958, so as to pretend much more recent composition. Altogether, the historical information offered in this essay varies from the bad to the inadequate; it is used to support a scheme devised a century and a half ago; out of this we are to gather a revolutionary modern "theory."

Doubts are unfortunately only reinforced by what would seem to be the most important essay in the book, that on women and the Renaissance. This apparently incorporates the moment of revelation that first provided Kelly with her new "vantage point." The Renaissance, she says, is generally regarded as a great age of liberation—socially, politically, in matters of art, learning, and literature. No doubt, she agrees, it was all that for men, but for women it marked a moment of repression which reduced their powers of action and self-expression well below the level attained earlier. It did so mainly by introducing a "bourgeois morality" of chastity and seclusion and by inventing the notorious "double standard." Here again Kelly's starting point is wildly out of date: to her the male interpretation of the Renaissance stands now where Jakob Burckhardt supposedly fixed it in 1860. Whole libraries of learning, much of which has cast comprehensive doubt upon the whole concept of the Renaissance as a unique and liberating movement even in matters of the mind, have passed her by, as has a general movement away from the Middle Ages as an identifiable stage in human development. She maintains her argument by paying attention to very minor manifestations of the sixteenth and twelfth centuries respectively which are given the status of universally held views on the role of women. On the one hand, there is Baldassare Castiglione's *Courtier* (1513–18); on the other side stands the idea of "courtly love" celebrated by the troubadours and the writers of *chansons*. Here allegedly we find a contrast between the condemnation and the worship of adulterous (extramarital) sex, and with it the growing incarceration of women, who in the days of the *Minnesänger* could strike up sexual relationships where they pleased, in a freedom which reflected their independence in general. The extraction of massive conclusions touching all social, economic, and political life from a few writers of books is unfortunately typical of Kelly's method, and it will not do, as every beginning graduate student is surely made to learn. Working with so little material, she easily manipulates the evidence to suit her purpose. Though she mentions the problem of whether "courtly love" represents real experiences or a literary convention of pretended adoration, she thinks the question of no importance: what matters is that there was a society which promoted an ideology of free and extramarital love. A society? She admits that the supposed experience seems to have been confined to women of the aristocracy, but then calmly applies her vision of free women to centuries of time and millions of people. The multiplicity of those societies comes to be assessed from a few poems and romances, from the light literature which some people in the south of France liked to read. (Lancelot's involvement with Guinevere was treated much less tolerantly in the northern tradition!) Even if one were to give to courtly love a place of modest importance in judging social attitudes, a very different interpretation offers itself, one that is no less convincing and no less romantically insecure. Freud has failed to impress Kelly, whose psychology of people is distressingly simple. But looking at all that submission to noble ladies, all that kissing of feet, all that adoration of *belles dames sans merci*, one must be struck by the powerful strain of masochism, of a desire to be dominated by women. A theory of history resting on such foundations is, even by the standards of what passes for theory in history, exceptionally ill-grounded and, frankly, rather silly.

Too much, far too much, gets ignored in these essays. How can Kelly damn Castiglione for preaching chastity to women and never once mention the medieval nunnery from whose constraints (others have argued) the Reformation freed women? How can she reduce the practice of a humanist education, experience of which in fact gave intellectual

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Seeing American Foreign Policy Whole

Brewster C. Denny

Denny analyzes the key elements and events in American foreign policy from George Washington to the present, devoting major attention to the early years of the Republic and to the presidencies of FDR, Truman, and JFK. "A thoughtful and balanced overview, marked by historical understanding, an instinct for crucial institutional issues, and unfaltering common sense." — Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. $16.95

The Missing Dimension

Governments and Intelligence Communities in the Twentieth Century

Edited by Christopher Andrew and David Dilks

Secret intelligence has been described as the "missing dimension of most diplomatic history." This volume, consisting of "eleven humorous but wide-ranging and hard-hitting articles, illustrates the erratic and even farcical evolution of our modern 'intelligence communities' and points up the unresolved paradoxes created by their growth and professionalization in democratic societies." — Zara Steiner, *Times Literary Supplement.* $27.95

The Rise and Fall of Détente

Relaxations of Tension in U.S.-Soviet Relations, 1953-84

Richard W. Stevenson

The "Moscow Détente" of the 1970s was, according to Stevenson, the fourth in a series. By comparing it with the "Spirit of Geneva" (1955), "Spirit of Camp David" (1959), and "Post-Missile Crisis Détente" (1963-64), he clarifies détente's essential nature. "The most thorough and penetrating study of superpower détente so far produced. Fills a gap of which students of recent international politics have long been conscious." — Hedley Bull, Oxford University. $22.50

To Make Democracy Safe for America

Patricians and Preparedness in the Progressive Era

Michael Pearlman

"Should be read by anyone interested in contemporary calls for the peacetime draft." — Andrew Moravcsik, *Washington Monthly.* "What makes Pearlman's well-written account so fascinating is his relating of this tale largely through brilliant critical and analytical sketches of leading proponents and other expounders of civic virtue through preparedness and universal military training." — Richard Lowitt, *Military Affairs.* $19.95

European Security and France

François de Rose

Foreword by Henry A. Kissinger

"No student of European security — and that should include anyone concerned with the future of the West — can afford to form an opinion without reading this thoughtful work." — Henry A. Kissinger. "A tour de force in identifying and addressing the key problems on the security agendas of the Western allies within NATO." — Edward A. Kolodziej, author of *French International Policy under de Gaulle and Pompidou.* $19.95

At bookstores, or order toll free 800/638-3030. Maryland residents phone 301/824-7300.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS

54 East Gregory Drive
Champaign, IL 61820

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

liberty to many women, to the imposition on helpless girls of a classical culture "with its patriarchal and misogynous bias"? Does she really suppose that only the Renaissance made women suffer from what she regards as the patriarchal and misogynous bias of Christianity? We hear something of the chance given to the medieval noblewoman to participate in business, estate management, and politics; nothing is said of the much greater share that women of all classes demonstrably took in such labors in the three centuries after 1500. The essay on the *Querelles des femmes* (the growth of literary feminism from Christine de Pisan to Mary Wollstonecraft), relying on better guides, offers sounder history, but major claims are again made on very modest evidence elicited by a single-track inquiry.

The trouble with Kelly's history is, at heart, threefold: it is far too limited, too poorly informed, and too American.

Limited: her concerns practically never extend beyond traditions of literature and art. She gives no sign of having known any economic history or anything specific about government and politics. Her socialism is the socialism of a pathetic illusion. Marx, though mentioned, is never cited: for all the evidence of these essays, she did not read him, which is perhaps just as well since Marx's attitudes do not suit well with feminist predilections. Like many present-day socialist theoreticians, she took refuge with Engels, a much nicer man. I see no sign that she had thought seriously about the meaning or reality of the concept of class, her chief analytical tool; she used the term as a conventional prop for her gender-based schema; she never analyzed it or came to grips with the proliferation of debate which Marxian simplicities have called forth. She did not seem to have noticed that the lot of women, public or private, is markedly less fortunate in socialist countries than in the strongholds of capitalism; indeed, at least the upper-class women of czarist Russia, where European mores had penetrated, were "freer" in the feminist sense than are the women of the USSR. Kelly operated by means of a tunnel vision created out of illusions.

Poorly informed: by the ordinary standards of historical research and method, the work presented in these essays is thin and poor. Kelly used a tiny sample of primary sources, all of them in print, and rested enormous interpretative theories upon them; she employed a very selective range of secondary writings in which books by men nearly always feature only if they were written long ago. After her conversion in about 1970, she seems to have read only the writings of fellow feminists. Yet on this utterly inadequate basis of learning she confidently reorganized half the world's history. It would be unkind to analyze her notions concerning fifth-century Athens, of which, it seems, only the fact that respectable women supposedly remained out of the public eye had struck her. Occasional references to anthropological inquiries were applied without any of that sense of relative values depending on historical circumstances which the study of history is supposed to create. Plain howlers abound. On three successive pages she equipped manorial courts with the power to inflict the death penalty, assigned such "children of serfs" as entered the priesthood to invariably inferior positions in the Church, ascribed the use of the term *middle class* to the Middle Ages, and supposed that farmers' wives called their husbands "masters," a term reserved for the gentry. Some of her errors derived from the tendentious mistakes of the social historians she relied on: even the feminist historian can be the victim of her male contemporaries.

American: this may well be the touchiest aspect of this critique. Kelly's point of view, the position where she dropped anchor, remains throughout very specifically governed by notions and convictions developed within the United States and drawn from the experiences and attitudes of American women. These ideas have certainly been making inroads elsewhere, but their American aspect always stands out to the observer from outside the United States. The interpretation offered in Joan Kelly's essays of women's needs and desires is American, or perhaps Anglo-American at most, in terms of the contemporary scene, and it makes no attempt at all to understand the great majority of women of the past in their own right. Feminist historiography, like all the history written by fanatics, knows best what women of the past should have wanted and indeed would have wanted if they had not been "socially conditioned" into submissive attitudes. This splendidly universal escape hole denies the right and the power to think to myriads of women who understood

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the problems of existence in the miserable life to which God had, by creating them, condemned all mankind better than the privileged women of the North American continent can grasp. But it is the duty of historians to understand the people of the past, not to invent an alternative existence for them.

In Kelly's work, the standards and experiences of present-day America were universalized in a totally unhistorical fashion and without much display of historical understanding or empathy. This accounts for the recital of forerunners like Christine de Pisan and the ignoring of the many educated and effective women who were not feminists. It looks very much as though feminist historians do not wish to write history as history but to seek sisters in the past and to liberate posthumously the unenlightened. In the process they regularly impute, as Joan Kelly did, their own characteristic discontents to people who frequently lived happy lives in ways which the doctrine asserts cannot lead to anything but misery. There is nothing whatsoever wrong with the history of women, provided it is not written by feminists but by female or male historians. Real history results when the past is studied without rigorous preconceptions, studied in all the available sources, studied in full consciousness of variety and change, and studied for the sake of understanding the past, not for the purpose of today substituting female dominance for male. Joan Kelly wished her history to assist in freeing humanity from suffering, from indignity, from "the cruel and stupid political world." We can all share her idealism and her hopes, but we cannot but wonder why she should ever have learned from history that only men corrupt, or why she should have thought that the unsound methods she pursued in the writing of history would help to save mankind.

By the evidence of this collection of essays, women's history needs to take a long look at itself. But then feminism is a religion, and feminist history constitutes an attempt to underpin dogmatics for that religion. Like all dogmatics it now and again hits on true points and valuable insights, but like all dogmatics it is miles away from real history. This is not in the least to say that men are right and women wrong, as no doubt I shall be accused of holding. All it means is that religious faiths are poor guides for historians.

Jesuitical

The Jesuits: History and Legend of the Society of Jesus. *By Manfred Barthel. Translated and adapted by Mark Howson. Morrow. $17.95.*

Reviewed by James Hitchcock

The Society of Jesus, whose 450th anniversary will be celebrated in 1990, has, through most of its history, been one of those institutions fated to summon forth endless, fascinating speculation and fantasy about itself, of a kind that defies explanation in light of its relatively mundane historical reality. Outside the Catholic Church, the tendency has been to see the Jesuits as almost preternaturally clever and devious, malign servants of a corrupt religion, who use a superficial worldliness and learning to promote obscurantist ends. Accuse a Jesuit of murdering four men and a dog, an old joke has it, and he will produce the dog. Within Catholicism, however, the image has as often as not been the opposite—a group whose loyalty to the Catholic faith is always in danger of subversion because of its attachment to worldly ways.

Ignatius of Loyola's most controversial reform was one that today seems almost insignificant—his men would pray the official priestly prayers in private rather than (according to the monastic rule) together in community several times a day. There was, however, a profound change implied in that provision—Jesuits were to find the meaning of their vocation not so much in formal religious exercises, important though those were, as in their active work. They were to measure their holiness by what they accomplished "for the greater glory of God."

Loyola could be characterized as a kind of holy pragmatist—he told his men to ruthlessly prune out of their lives whatever seemed not to be serving the particular divine goals to which they had committed themselves. (This could include lengthy prayer and fasting, for example, if these interfered with essential tasks.) From the beginning, Jesuits threw themselves into almost every kind of secular

JAMES HITCHCOCK is professor of history at St. Louis University. His latest book is *Years of Crisis: Collected Essays, 1970–1983.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

profession and field of learning, determined to bring Christ to the places from which he was absent. In time, the Society became the largest, most famous, and most imitated religious order in the Church, and Loyola was seemingly vindicated.

Yet a nagging doubt remains. Is it in fact possible to immerse oneself in the world's business without ultimately becoming worldly, whether this be theoretical science, advising princes, or promoting social change? Countless Jesuits show that indeed it is possible to be worldly as far as it is necessary to be, while not losing one's religious character. But the critics have also had a point. In the seventeenth century, for example, Blaise Pascal, with some justification, accused Jesuits of soothing the consciences of fashionable penitents rather than getting them to repent. From 1773 to 1814 the Society was actually suppressed by the Pope, for tangled religious and political reasons. (It stayed alive in Russia and Prussia, whose non-Catholic rulers valued the Jesuits as teachers and refused to recognize the papal decree.)

In 1981, Pope John Paul II took the extraordinary step of appointing a "personal delegate" to govern the Society, making it clear that he thought it suffered from serious abuses in need of correction. In effect, the Jesuits were deprived of the right of self-government, which was not restored for two years. Earlier, Paul VI had expressed similar anxieties about the Society and had vetoed certain of its proposed reforms. This conflict between the Pope and the Jesuits was especially significant in view of the fact that the Jesuits have traditionally been regarded as "the Pope's men."

Manfred Barthel is a German author and filmmaker who has written a serviceable account of the Society, reasonably accurate for the most part but inevitably leaning toward the sensational. (There have been a spate of such books about the Jesuits in the past ten years.) His grasp of detail, both in the Society and in the Church at large, is not always sure. For example, the Jesuits are far from unique in not being bound to parish work. He is wrong in saying that Ignatius's "self-help book," *The Spiritual Exercises*, is designed to enable the reader to "experience mystical ecstasy." To say that the Jesuits were "long since used to manipulating kings, queens, and bishops to suit their pleasure" is to give in to the wildest sort of popular fantasy about the Society.

Most of the book deals with the period before the suppression of 1773, and for the most part, Barthel inclines to the view that the Jesuits were crafty reactionaries. As he takes up the story of the "new society" of the nineteenth century, he becomes, at points, almost apoplectic with indignation that Jesuits were not dutiful liberals. This in turn makes it somewhat difficult for the reader to understand the recent confrontations with the Papacy. Thus the latter sections that lead to this confrontation, which readers might be inclined to find the most interesting, are the least useful, as it becomes obvious that Barthel's understanding of the inner history of the Society in the past twenty years is at best superficial, mainly dependent on the stereotypes of the popular media. Ironically, although he seems to mean to praise them, his analysis of what recent Jesuits have been up to would, if taken at face value, confirm their critics' worst charges and provide abundant proof of the rightness of the papal intervention.

Not for the first time, the Society seems to have succeeded, in the end, in seducing a would-be detractor. But a fundamental ambiguity remains: is the skeptic becoming more Catholic, or are the subtle defenders of the faith surrendering to an easy worldliness? Barthel, finally, admires his subjects for traits that, as his own book shows, mark a radical break with their whole tradition.

Old Thunder

HILAIRE BELLOC. *By A. N. Wilson. Atheneum. $17.95.*

Reviewed by SONYA RUDIKOFF

A bully, a coward, a liar, snobbish, posturing, ignorant, wrong; outrageous, irreverent, unreliable, repetitive, blasphemous; capricious, insensitive, intrusive; threatening, blundering, rampaging; noisy, dirty, vitriolic,

SONYA RUDIKOFF is currently working on a study of Virginia Woolf and language.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

monotonous, an opinionated super-tramp. . . .

It is in such words that Hilaire Belloc's biographer describes the well-known Catholic writer and historian. His personal charm is nevertheless asserted, in spite of these repellent traits, and a large intellectual value is similarly claimed for his prodigious output of some 150 works of history, poetry, travel writing, fiction, essays, and political journalism. A. N. Wilson, like Robert Speaight and others who have written about Belloc, provides all these adjectives, as well as the illuminating anecdotes. They present him, in his ranting as a young man, in his political ranting as a member of Parliament; from his public life to his old writer's dotage, his beard encrusted with food, his monkish robe filthy and spattered with candle wax. This was how Evelyn Waugh found him, on a last visit, shuffling, with a shaggy white beard, smelling like a fox. Here is the old curmudgeon reading by candlelight, muttering to himself as mice scampered over his bedclothes nibbling at the crumbs in his dressing gown; in summer, he would shuffle from his study to urinate outside on the lawn. He was then perhaps in his seventies, living in Sussex. Wilson relates how his devoted daughter and son-in-law, their children, the friends, the fellow Catholics and visiting priests, all cared for him, ministered to him, and respectfully surrounded him. His late persona had elements of Dr. Johnson and King Lear. When he died in 1953, there was a Requiem Mass in Westminster Cathedral, with the panegyric delivered by Monsignor Ronald Knox.

Belloc's reputed charm and personal genius are a problem for those who didn't know him, and the importance of his work presents a further problem. Wilson and other sympathetic critics say he wrote too much, wrote carelessly, wrote inaccurately, dishonestly, repetitiously. He formed his ideas very early and never modified them; his manner of asserting them forcefully, and with ever-increasing dogmatism, sarcasm, and belligerence, is well documented in Wilson's new biography. A reader who is less familiar with Belloc's entire oeuvre may be puzzled, then, to understand the nature of the genius that is always insisted upon, both a personal genius for friendship and an intellectual or literary or historical genius. Monsignor Knox, in his panegyric, spoke of Belloc as a prophet rather than an apostle, a writer who was committed to speak his truths rather than to persuade; a harbinger, like the prophets of old, disdained, disliked, even feared, and neither very welcome nor very charming. That was a way of interpreting Belloc's deplorable and repellent intellectual behavior as a contribution in some degree to the glory of God and the strengthening of the Faith. Such a claim accepts him gracefully, valuing his loyalty above other considerations of truth, civic and personal responsibility, or charity. Belloc's indefensible posture can thus be condemned or dismissed as either irrelevant or minor, or accepted as incidental to a greater mission.

In common with other nineteenth-century radicals, Belloc, born in 1870, feared the concentration of power in modern capitalism. His dream was of a pre-industrial, simple society, based on small-scale agriculture and craft, individual enterprise, the small community, the individual proprietor. He supported measures that would alleviate the lot of the poor, promote the welfare of workers, and liberate them from the power of imperialism, bureaucracy, and gigantic modern social institutions. It is a radicalism as different as possible from the collectivist or socialist thought of his contemporaries; the objects of his concern may have linked him with the Webbs or liberal reformers, or the Liberal party in which he found himself, but the remedies he proposed, and the etiology he accepted, were entirely different. He was Catholic, but not conservative or monarchist; this distinguished him from Maurras and *L'Action Française*. A republican, Belloc supported the Boers against the Empire, "Little England" against imperial hegemony, but he also invoked the Roman Empire and the grand civilizing ideal of Catholic Europe. He read the history of Europe and the Faith as a tragic drama; he saw not a story of progress in culture and social life, but a demonic Weberian interpretation of the growth of capitalism and modern industrial society.

Belloc's was a curious mixture of ideas and ideologies, but it was not unique or peculiar to him: some of these tenets were held by radicals and populists throughout the nineteenth century—Cobbett will come to mind—but anti-industrial and anti-modern sentiments do not often consort with an egalitarian republicanism *and* a fervent Catholicism.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This combination of views is less familiar in America than in Europe, and, in fact, those Americans mystified by, say, the incongruous social and political utterances of T. S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, Ezra Pound, or Rupert Brooke, or others of the period, might do well to look at Belloc's loyalties. The mixture of ideas warrants less attention, however, than the intensity and the pervasive irrationality with which he constructed and maintained it. The insistence on a conspiratorial role played by capitalists and Jews, for example, was characteristic of other nineteenth-century writers, but in Belloc it was virtually an obsession, the one he became known for.

Belloc himself and all his friends, biographers, and critics insist that he had no personal dislike of Jews and, in fact, was quite devoted to his Jewish secretary. Jews were not among his close friends, but he encountered them in the late nineteenth-century social and literary worlds, and as figures in a demonic mythology. He believed and often reiterated that Jewish bankers and financiers were responsible for the Boer War, World War I, and World War II, because they encouraged re-arming and profited from the munitions industry. He had theories about the British aristocracy having sold out to the Jews, as he believed the governing classes had done, and the political parties also. He hated Protestant countries, admired Catholic ones, thought the League of Nations was Masonic rubbish, believed from early days that Dreyfus was guilty and that the Dreyfusards deliberately tried to wreck the Church, the Army, and the French nation. He revered Mussolini as a model leader and the exemplar of ancient Roman virtues; only the "suburban sentiment" of the British press and the "Anglo-Judaic" conspiracy blinded the country to Mussolini's "subtle" and "great" diplomacy. Behind the various events in history were to be found Jewish financiers, Oxford dons, Germans, and Protestants in general. He also thought Christianity was encumbered with "Yiddish folklore," referred to St. Paul as an "Old Yid," adding, in the words of a Dominican about St. Jerome, "If he is a saint, anyone can be a saint." The Rothschilds, the Beits, the Wernhers, the Oppenheimers obsessed him, stimulating his talent for nonsense verse, as in the following lines about a great Rothschild house next to the Duke of Wellington's Apsley House:

At the end of Piccadilly is a place
Of habitation for the Jewish race
Awaiting their regained Jerusalem.
These little huts, they say, suffice for them.
Here Rothschild lives, chief of the tribe abhorr'd
Who tried to put to death Our Blessed Lord.
But, on the third day, as the Gospel shows,
Cheating their machinations, He arose:
In Whose commemoration, now and then,
We persecute these curly-headed men.

Aristocrats had long annoyed him, but peers who were Jews provoked the savage muse, as when the first Baron Swaythling died:

Lord Swaythling, whom we loved and knew
On earth as Mr. Montagu,
Will probably be known in hell
As Mr Moses Samuel:
For though they do not sound the same,
The latter is his real name.

Cromwell, Henry VIII, Dreyfus, Lloyd George, Asquith—other Belloc bêtes noires—did not inspire the muse to comparable flights. So savage was the muse that Belloc mixed up Lord Bearsted (Marcus Samuel), of Royal Dutch Shell and M. Samuel & Co., with Lord Swaythling, a banker and Liberal, whose "real name" was Samuel Montagu. Perhaps the real target was Lord Swaythling's capable nephew, Herbert Samuel (later Viscount Samuel), a Balliol contemporary and rival.

A radical might have been expected to be sensitive to the plight of the Jewish masses in the East End, the refugees from Czarist persecutions, the unemployed, the sweated poor, the subjects of Charles Booth's investigations of London life and labor; they were to be found in Whitechapel, and at Toynbee Hall, where the enlightened rich and powerful came to help the poor. Belloc's eyes were not on the poor, however, but on the fabled Rothschilds, the Sassoons, Baron Hirsch, Sir Ernest Cassel, the bankers; he mistakenly classed the Barings as Jews because they were bankers. They were all part of the Prince of Wales's circle, and even after he became King of England, the Prince continued to visit their houses and shooting moors and palatial estates; his yacht was named for a Rothschild bride and the Royal presence was noted at Rothschild weddings and funerals. Admittedly, such talk of the activities of wealthy Jewish financiers was a kind of shorthand, a single, simple notion for grasping the complex

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

disparate phenomena of modern life. Social and economic transformations in late nineteenth-century England were profound, as agriculture declined and as industry and, even more, finance became the major sources of wealth. Still, there were enough of his contemporaries who did not share Belloc's demonology about the Jews or his incessant pursuit of the matter, who experienced the same social and economic conditions, to invalidate that analysis as an explanation of Belloc's compulsion. A. N. Wilson deplores Belloc's seemingly uncontrollable, unmoderated preoccupation. Hardly a peripheral notion, it was so intimately, so structurally implicated in all Belloc's theorizing that a reader cannot ignore it, now, after all that has happened, or dismiss it as merely "tasteless." Even seventy-five years ago, long before the Holocaust, this obsession was repellent and unacceptable. Belloc's friends were put off by it then, perceiving clearly the point of his exclusive concern with the rich and powerful. So it becomes not just a question of taste, or of deciding, as Wilson observes about the Rothschild verse, "Either you find this funny or you don't," but rather a question whether anything at all can be salvaged now. Or will the vast output simply gather dust on the library shelves?

The noisy Belloc—the arrogant, combative, energetic public person he took care to become, and took delight in remaining—would have made a fit subject for one of his own cautionary tales. He was born of a French father and English mother, literally at the beginning of the Franco-Prussian War, and just as Pope Pius IX enunciated the doctrine of papal infallibility. It was a significant conjunction of events, as Wilson notes. Almost more predictive were the sound effects of a tremendous storm that broke out in his little French village just as he was born: throughout his childhood, whenever he had a tantrum, his mother would teasingly call him "Old Thunder." Brought up by and among women, fatherless from the age of two, Belloc was born into circumstances that reinforced the belligerence, dogmatism, and the pugnacious energy that were to characterize his adult style. From the French village, he thundered on to Cardinal Newman's Oratory School in England, to the French Army, to Balliol, and to a London life; he was an M.P. from 1906 to 1910

The Yale Review

Kai Erikson, editor

The Summer 1985 issue of *The Yale Review* is a special poetry issue, featuring essays on poetry by Anthony Hecht and David Kalstone, as well as a hitherto-unpublished preface by Marianne Moore. There will be poems by John Ashbery, Thom Gunn, and John Peck, and reviews by Robert Shaw on Seamus Heaney, by David Halperin on Theocritus, by Katha Pollitt on Louise Bogan, and by Richard Wertime on the prose of Howard Nemerov and John Frederick Nims.

1985 marks the 75th anniversary of *The Yale Review,* and to celebrate the editors are presenting a grand retrospective of the best articles, fiction, and poetry from its earlier years in the Autumn and Winter issues. Works by contributors such as Sherwood Anderson, E. M. Forster, André Gide, Maxim Gorky, Thomas Mann, Leon Trotsky, H. G. Wells, Edith Wharton, and Virginia Woolf will be included, along with special essays on the past by the editors and by the regular reviewers.

Please send the _____ Summer 1985
_____ Autumn 1985
_____ Winter 1986 issue of *The Yale Review* at $5.00 per issue.

_____ I would like a year's subscription to *The Yale Review* at $14.00 ($22 for institutions).

My check for _____ is enclosed. (CT residents add 7½% sales tax.)

Or charge _____ MasterCard _____ VISA

Account # _____

Expiration date _____ Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Yale University Press, Dept. 15
92A Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and traveled frequently to his Manchester constituency; he had an old house in Sussex, and all his life he traveled ceaselessly to France, America, Africa, the Holy Land.

Belloc married, fathered five children, adored his wife, who died in 1914, adored his mother, who lived on until she was nearly ninety-six, and was never without an entourage. His mother, a Catholic convert, was the daughter of an important figure in radical and liberal circles, and the great-granddaughter of Joseph Priestley, discoverer of oxygen; she herself was early interested in advanced thought, was a friend of George Eliot's, and had collaborated with Barbara Bodichon on *The Englishwoman's Journal*. (What would the author of *Daniel Deronda* have thought of "Old Thunder"?) Belloc did not learn anti-Semitism at her knee—she was to be extremely critical of his views—but, as Wilson observes, more likely from French soldiers in his army days. So powerful was that experience for him that it marked the way he spoke French: unlike the lofty classical language of his father's house and class, Belloc's French was the argot of those cheeky rough companions whose speech he barely understood, who called him *"l'anglais"* and provoked his violent identification with them. All his life he would bellow the marching songs he learned then, and he kept a sentimental feeling about his old regiment. There was also an ancestor, Moses Belloc of Nantes, a seventeenth-century wine merchant, or perhaps shipowner or attorney general, possibly named Moses *Bloch*. Later, in 1901, when Belloc applied for British citizenship, his name on the papers was misspelled as "Bloc." Belloc dismissed the suggestion of Jewish ancestry, but his violent anti-Dreyfusard stance may be seen more clearly in this context.

With the exception of Chesterton and his brother, Belloc's friends disagreed with his violent opinions. Wilson recounts how the friends found his obsessions boring, monotonous, even maniacal: Basil Blackwood chided him about his "petty jealousy of those who are richer and more prosperous," and Duff Cooper found his vulgar anti-Semitism intolerable. George Wyndham, one of the "Souls," an eminent Tory statesman and son of Lord Leconfield, disputed with him but responded to his energy and evident relish for bellicose encounters; so did Wilfred Scawen Blunt, the idiosyncratic Arabist, or, in his Oxford circle, such younger friends as Aubrey Herbert, Raymond Asquith (the Prime Minister's son), Auberon Herbert, Lord Lucas, Maurice Baring (the writer and adventurer, Lord Revelstoke's brother). They argued with Belloc, went on walking trips together, or he tutored them, or simply discoursed in his thundering style. They were drawn to him, perhaps for his vigorous inexhaustible individualistic presence, perhaps because he appeared to them as the very type of the genius. Others, such as John Buchan, F. E. Smith, and F. W. Hirst, later editor of *The Economist*, were old sparring partners from the Oxford Union. There, Belloc joined in all the famous rituals, the rehearsals for public life, as so many eminent men had done before him. A certain style of social and political eloquence was cultivated in the Union, specific debating mannerisms, and methods of categorizing knowledge. The tone was one that Belloc would have encountered on first coming to Balliol, exemplified in the famous rhyme about Benjamin Jowett:

> This is Balliol, I am Jowett,
> All there is to know, I know it;
> What I don't know isn't knowledge;
> I am Master of this College.

Among Balliol's 170 undergraduates, Belloc was a noisy eccentric figure. He got a First, but he did not win the All Souls Fellowship that might have secured his future. He stayed on in Oxford, writing and tutoring the sons of the rich and powerful, hoping that Balliol would make him a Fellow, but it didn't. All his life he would be bitter about these failures, railing against dons and Oxford knowledge, with an almost rabid intemperance usually reserved only for the Jews. All his life, too, he would frame intellectual and political issues in that arrogant, fluent, belligerent style, much as his contemporary and Union antagonist, F. E. Smith, would do as barrister, as attorney general, as Lord Chancellor, as Lord Birkenhead. It was the method of constant attack, of agile defense, of giving no quarter, scoring vehement hits, and dissolving one's weakness in projection onto the opponent. Not surprisingly, "Old Thunder" flourished at Oxford, and in the Union; later, the House of Commons would engage him for a time, but the work of politics interested him

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

far less than the oratory. Belloc despised the spirit of accommodation, the modulations of constituency and party politics. He much preferred the role of flamboyant Catholic ideologue.

Belloc's voluminous biographies of Danton, Marie Antoinette, Robespierre, Cromwell, James II, Charles I, Cranmer, the histories of England, the political and economic tracts, the war reporting—most of it can no longer be read; the scholarship has been superseded, the theories punctured, the facts corrected, even the very style of historical writing can no longer be valued, and the tendentious cast of narrative is useless. Whether much of that enormous shelf of Belloc books continues to be read is a question; but the nonsense verse about children, animals, and peers stands out as the exception. From their very first publication, they met with great success and enthusiasm: there was *The Bad Child's Book of Beasts* (1896), and then *More Beasts (for Worse Children)* (1897), followed by *A Moral Alphabet* (1899), and then all of them collected in *Cautionary Tales for Children* (1907). They were created in a complicated moment, not for his own children, but with, and for, the young sons of the aristocracy and governing classes whom he was tutoring, as he nursed his disappointment in the failure at All Souls but still hoped for something from Balliol. The tone of the verse is mock-severe, solemn, knowing, not parental, but rather the tone of strict, kindly, monitory nannies' discipline.

It was, and is, a tone peculiarly English, recalling the tracts and tales of traditional children's stories, with, at the same time, a nuance of the neat French self-evident morality of La Fontaine, a fascinating mixture of the dominant elements in Belloc's life. They were not united, and he never again rose to that perfection. Of course the times have changed, although Mrs. Thatcher's peremptory scolding strikes the English as continuous with that tone; and even Harold Macmillan, recently, on being made a peer, spoke in the House of Lords about disputes between the superpowers as if they were disagreements between rival nannies. The tone seems to account for human knowledge and human frailties, relying for its force on the summing up of life situations with a single feature, defect, or error, as in the tale of Henry King, whose

Hudson's Heritage

A chronicle of the founding and the flowering of the Western Reserve village of Hudson, Ohio

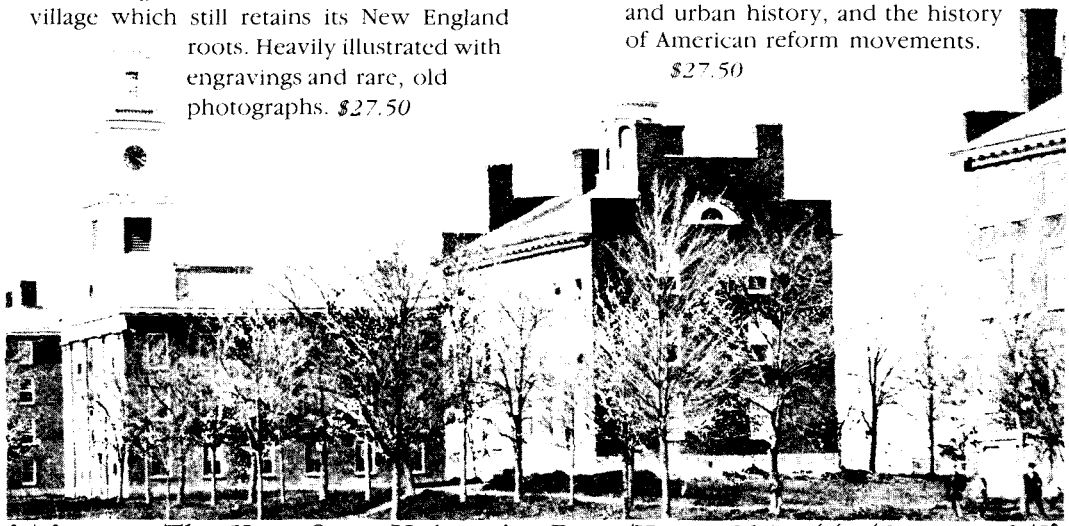
by Grace Goulder Izant

A charming historical narrative about an Ohio village which still retains its New England roots. Heavily illustrated with engravings and rare, old photographs. *$27.50*

Cleveland: A Tradition of Reform

edited by David D. Van Tassel and John Grabowski

Essays by prominent historians make a fascinating contribution to regional and urban history, and the history of American reform movements. *$27.50*



The Kent State University Press/Kent, Ohio 44242

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

chief defect was eating little bits of string "and was early cut off with Dreadful Agonies." Later, Belloc would try to anatomize society with a simple single idea, like Europe and the Faith, the failure of parliaments, or the Jewish Peril, but on a larger scale the effort would be less successful. In the ingenious and amusing verses of *A Moral Alphabet*, the posture of nursery moralist was adopted, with smirking and clever asides, advising that

> Decisive action in the hour of need
> Denotes the Hero but does not succeed.

Or that

> The law protects you. Go your gentle way:
> The Other Man has always got to Pay.

Morality itself is called into question in morals such as

> These verses teach a clever child to find
> Excuse for doing all that he's inclined.

Or

> This creature [the cobra], though disgusting and appalling,
> Conveys no kind of Moral worth recalling.

And the sense of morality as a set of conventions, rituals, or games is conveyed in

> No reasonable Little Child expects
> A Grown-up Man to make a rhyme on X.

Grown-ups, however, protect the wisdom of nannies, half wanting to believe in the infant certainties, at the same time enjoying the liberation from them. This complex feeling helps to account for the great popularity of Belloc's verses in literate households of the early twentieth century too sophisticated for the older moralistic tracts. The tone is also snobbish: bad children are cut out of rich uncles' or aunts' wills, or eaten by lions as punishment for letting go of nannie's hand, or are attacked by fierce animals if they refuse to learn to read, or won't find anyone to marry them if they make awful faces, or, if they are cursed with vanity and pride, they will end up as bootblacks (at the Savoy, of course). The animal verses also incorporate questions about nannie wisdom:

> The Big Baboon is found upon
> The plains of Cariboo:
> He goes about with nothing on
> (A shocking thing to do).
> But if he dressed respectably,
> And let his whiskers grow,
> How like this Big Baboon would be
> To Mister So-and-So!

And real circumstances are not forgotten:

> The Polar Bear is unaware
> Of cold that cuts me through:
> For why: he has a coat of hair.
> I wish I had one too!

It is in such verses that Belloc himself is suggested, living upstairs in the poky rooms near New College, or later, overlooking Wadham, waiting for the Balliol Fellowship, unable even to get a lectureship, as he is in

> *The Whale that wanders round the Pole*
> Is not a table fish.
> You cannot bake or boil him whole
> Nor serve him in a dish;
> But you may cut his blubber up
> And melt it down for oil,
> And so replace the colza bean
> (A product of the soil).
> These facts should all be noted down
> And ruminated on,
> By every boy in Oxford town
> Who wants to be a Don.

The bad children and solemn instructive beasts were allied with bad or unusual peers, such as Lord Lundy, who was too often moved to tears, and thus ruined his political career, or Lord Findlay, who tried to mend the electric light himself and was struck dead:

> And serve him right!
> It is the business of the wealthy man
> To give employment to the artisan.

The voice heard in these verses recalls that nannies were traditionally of a lower class than their charges, but, given quite comprehensive authority, they exercised it with a conscientiousness and severity exaggerated by the special nature of their identifications. It was a peculiarly appropriate voice to be adopted by the Balliol man, who was becoming a fixture in the aristocratic families of his pupils. The verses have private jokes, but a nephew of the ninth Duke of Bedford, a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

descendant of the Duke of Norfolk, or a brother of Lord Cromer could have shared them. He must have been a relevation for them, must have seemed powerful and rare, expressive, poetic, an adventurer; not just Rabelaisian, but Falstaffian as well.

It is a nice question, who was to be entertained? Some appeal or message in them spoke beyond the immediate circumstances, and still speaks, far from that circle of young Oxford friends around Belloc as he nursed his failures and as they contemplated (or avoided the contemplation of) their future lives. In the late 1890s and early years of the twentieth century, that inversion of nursery morality could be amusing because the nursery morality could be assumed, even if it was receding. Now, eighty or more years later, the charm must lie in the remoteness and in the widespread longing for circumscribed worlds, including the snobbery that reinforced them. Even as the verses were written, however, that world was vanishing, and 1914 loomed ahead. The solemn irony could lose its humor, the pieties lose their nuances, the witty reversals could flatten out; but Old Thunder roared on. A modern reader may not be able to follow him through the rest of those 150 volumes, may prefer to know him only in the cautionary tales. As for the grand claims, the reader may choose whether to believe that Belloc was so remarkable a speaker, so large a genius. The evidence for it is not to be seen in this biography.

The Hidden Trunk

HAWTHORNE'S SECRET: AN UN-TOLD TALE. *By Philip Young. Godine. $15.95.*

Reviewed by DONNA RIFKIND

Are we our secrets? The question is a simple one, yet central to any discussion of literary biography, for what biographers hint and whisper about their subjects often seems more important than what they explain directly. Biographers have learned from literature that character is not a flat object but an

DONNA RIFKIND works for a literary agency in New York.

INCHARDI

Novels by J. Inchardi
$15 each

Lines On The Death Of A Fisherman

Three Jews In A Tub

Dreamship

Yurros

A Paper Toy

Intercurse

Jehovah Mafioso

Saturn Maru

Drek Shlak

Om Budsman

Order from **Sirius Books**
P.O. Box 177
Freeport, Maine 04032

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unfolding through time and circumstance and is, of course, shaped by both. The ways writers (novelists as well as biographers) choose to guard and offer their secrets does much to shape our understanding of their subjects, and telling a secret shares many of the techniques of telling a story: both require organization, persuasiveness, and a certain intensity of interest. "Biography," Leon Edel has written, "works in mysteries. That is its fascination."

Character studies revealed to us in this way, like narratives, will of course always be incomplete, since they emerge from the selective points of view of the tellers. After a person dies, we must be content to rely on secondhand opinions and the archives he has left behind. A biographer trying to assemble facts about a dead person may never be more than a tourist in his subject's dusty attic, taking a brief look around, and perhaps missing the packet of letters in a hidden trunk that might illuminate the mysteries about his subject's life and work. Philip Young is a biographer who has taken more than a brief look in Nathaniel Hawthorne's attic and who believes he has found that hidden trunk. He reveals its contents in his latest book, *Hawthorne's Secret*, and claims to have found information "without which Hawthorne was a somewhat different writer, different man."

Hawthorne himself was one of the great and complex writers about secrets, so it is not a surprise that, even after the extensive research already completed upon his life and works, critics should still be interested in how the details of his life correspond to those in his fiction. Philip Young begins his book by asserting that the collective knowledge about Hawthorne, though extensive, is insufficient: "Long on information, short in understanding," he writes, "lives of Hawthorne accumulate endlessly."

It is true that much about Hawthorne's life remains mysterious and perhaps always will. He coveted solitude, and the relationship between social postures and private beliefs is his most recurrent fictional theme. From one point of view he was an extremely public man, participating in the well-known Brook Farm experiment and accepting the consulship at Liverpool offered by his friend Franklin Pierce. He was, during other periods, reclusive in the extreme, most notably for twelve years after his graduation from Bowdoin and again after his marriage to Sophia Peabody in 1842. Through fiction, Hawthorne constantly tried to balance his conflicting impulses to remain involved in, yet separate from, the events around him. He wrote in *The Scarlet Letter*: "We may prate of the circumstances that lie around us, and even of ourself, but still keep the inmost Me behind its veil to this extent, and within these limits, an author methinks, may be autobiographical, without violating either the reader's right or his own."

Philip Young believes that *The Scarlet Letter* is in fact something of an autobiography; that Hawthorne used the fictional account of Hester Prynne's punishment to confess a secret sin of his own without having actually to declare that sin publicly, as Hester does. Young claims that Hawthorne devised nearly all of his fictions in a way that allowed him both to reveal and to disguise his most private feelings, some of which Hawthorne himself was probably only partially aware of. Young cites a comment Herman Melville made to Hawthorne's son Julian that he, Melville, was "convinced Hawthorne had all his life concealed some great secret which would, were it known, explain all the mysteries in his career." While Julian Hawthorne disagreed, Young concurs, and here he reveals what he believes to be the "great secret" in Hawthorne's life.

That secret has several sides to it. First and most interesting is Young's new discovery about Hawthorne's ancestry. Previous researchers have documented his paternal lineage, which included several magistrates who participated in the Salem witch trials. Young finds that on Hawthorne's mother's side, five generations before him, he had ancestors named Nicholas Manning and his sisters Anstice and Margaret, who were all accused of incestuous behavior and brought to trial in 1681. The sisters were condemned to sit in public on high stools, like Hester Prynne, wearing signs that read, "This is for whorish carriage with my naturall Brother." Nicholas fled. Young believes that Hawthorne had access to the texts recording these events, that the knowledge of them affected him profoundly, and that he translated the Manning sisters' public humiliation into Hester Prynne's predicament in *The Scarlet Letter* to air and to expiate his own inherited shame.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

So in the beginning was the Letter, Young believes, in Hawthorne's creation of his most famous book; except that, according to Young, he substituted the letter *I* for "incest" with *A* for "adultery," and in the fictional transposition he allowed himself to remain distant from and yet related to Hester Prynne. It is not true in this case that our limited understanding of Hawthorne's motivation must be kept separate, lest it reduce the novel's value. On the contrary, although Melville, in praising Hawthorne, wished that "all excellent books were foundlings, without father or mother, that so it might be, we could glorify them, without including their ostensible authors," *The Scarlet Letter* is a denser and more interesting book now that we know something about this interpretation of its "father's" dense, interesting mind and heart.

Hawthorne's indirect participation in the book makes the characters of Hester, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth more affecting, since we now better understand the author's attempt to steer between objectivity and sympathy. Our comprehension that Hawthorne shared something of Hester's pain makes her live as a character, makes us want also to share her feelings, to join with author and character to form a temporary network of human emotion. It was Henry James who wrote that "the artist is present in every page of every book from which he sought so assiduously to eliminate himself"; so, by the act of reading, are we present as well, and because we want to be. Young's discovery of Hawthorne's very personal relationship to *The Scarlet Letter* is, in my view, an imaginative and useful observation that enhances our appreciation of the book.

But now Young goes on to divulge the other aspect of Hawthorne's secret, this time involving not the author's ancestors but the relatives with whom he lived for most of his life. Young tries to prove in the latter pages of his book that Hawthorne and his sister Elizabeth were engaged in an incestuous relationship that paralleled that of the Mannings and gave him even a greater motivation to tell *The Scarlet Letter* story: not only was he revealing/disguising an ancestral shame, he was also confessing his own secret sin.

At this point, Young's scheme becomes a bit too neat, and a reader begins to ask questions. Even if, as Young explains, Hawthorne and

RUTGERS ∷ BOOKS

EDISON'S ELECTRIC LIGHT
Biography of an Invention
Robert Friedel and Paul Israel, with Bernard S. Finn
120 illustrations, October, $27.95

THE FUTURE OF STATE UNIVERSITIES
Issues in Teaching, Research, and Public Service
Leslie W. Koepplin and David A. Wilson, editors
Introduction by Edward J. Bloustein
October, $20.00 cloth; $8.00 paper

DEMOCRACY ANCIENT AND MODERN
(Revised Edition)
M. I. Finley
September, $20.00 cloth; $9.00 paper

VICTORIAN SCIENCE AND VICTORIAN VALUES
Literary Perspectives
James Paradis and Thomas Postlewait, editors
Color plates, $30.00 cloth; $14.00 paper

Please enclose check with order, and include $1.50 postage/handling. NJ residents, add 6% sales tax. Send all orders to:
Rutgers University Press, Distribution Center, P.O. Box 4869
Hampden Station, Baltimore MD 21211

Rutgers University Press,
30 College Avenue,
New Brunswick, NJ 08903

RUTGERS ∷ PRESS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Elizabeth were indeed very close, and even if she disliked his wife Sophia, and committed herself to a solitary life possibly in part because of the fierce possessiveness she felt toward her brother, does any of this prove that the two siblings were involved in incestuous behavior? What family members, moreover, are not encumbered with resentments and rivalries such as these? Are we to label this relationship "incestuous" with the same facility as the Freudian-influenced nowadays tend to term a son's strong attachment to his mother "Oedipal"? Labels used in this way are often empty because, at least in this case, they are only labels, leftovers from the psychoanalytical banquet, and suggest more activity than actually occurred, according to the evidence we have. This is where Young's argument begins to break down, burdened by unsubstantiated guesses and ambiguous associations of facts.

Although it is not usually the case, a book's problem may be that it suffers from too much clarity, and *Hawthorne's Secret* is such a book. It is a model of clear prose; the points it makes are briefly but not loosely formulated. Its aggressive style is appropriate to the bold assertions Young makes. But perhaps Young's biography should be longer, deeper, more receptive to the untidy elements of Hawthorne's psychology and less eager to incorporate these elements into a gracefully linked network of hidden motivations. Henry James, in an essay on James Russell Lowell (from *Essays in London*), makes a beautiful presentation of this tendency to want to simplify a man's inward wishes and outward behavior in order to understand him better:

> After a man's long work is over and the sound of his voice is still, those in whose regard he has held a high place find his image strangely simplified and summarized. The hand of death, in passing over it, has smoothed the folds, made it more typical and general. The figure retained by memory is compressed and intensified; accidents have dropped away from it and shades have ceased to count; it stands, sharply, for a few estimated and cherished things, rather than, nebulously, for a swarm of possibilities.

The best literary biographies, like the best novels, are those that try most fully to celebrate a writer's "swarm of possibilities," and the more fully these are celebrated, the more alive that writer's character seems to us. That "swarm," that complexity, is much more interesting than the description of "a few estimated and cherished things," and it is precisely what is lacking in Young's biography. As noted, a living character unfolds; it does not lie static, and the pleasure in reading about a life comes when we are reminded of the fullness and quickness with which this life, like ours, has passed.

It is ironic that Young's subject is a writer who was so attuned to the complexity of undisclosed sin, when his own explanation of Hawthorne's secret is so flatly reduced to one "estimated and cherished" fact—a pity that Young has limited the richness of Hawthorne's sense of mystery to a solid, all-encompassing secret. Joseph Conrad once noted: "The dead can live only with the exact intensity and quality of the life imparted to them by the living." Hawthorne understood this, and his fictions are full of an intensity of hidden feeling that he often associates with the working of magic: guilt transformed into deed, sin into riches. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester's adulterous act yields a beautiful daughter, Pearl; in the story "Rappaccini's Daughter," a man's lover develops the power to poison as well as to enchant him. In Hawthorne's tales, secrets are frequently equated with treasure: he often writes about "the hoarded iniquity of deed or thought," to borrow a phrase from "The Minister's Black Veil." It is fascinating to think of secrets in this way, as our most valuable possessions, which we often handle like currency, using them to persuade others of our worth, our depth, our need to be loved.

Young, finally, has sought too simple a scheme in which to place Hawthorne's complex private thoughts. The novelist's life, like all lives, had many secrets, not just one. Young, of course, was required to make choices, to concentrate on particular facts about his subject. But to review all of Hawthorne's work in the light of one large fact, to see everything skewed toward the attributed weight of that fact, is to reduce both the work and the life. Young has leaned too heavily toward "a few estimated and cherished things," choosing to ignore the "swarm of possibilities" in Hawthorne's life. Admittedly, the biographer's task is difficult, and one that Hawthorne himself struggled to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

achieve: to remain coldly outside his subject and yet passionately, vitally, intricately within it. In his fiction, Hawthorne managed largely to achieve this balance. In *Hawthorne's Secret*, Young has not.

Tyrant's Teacher

SENECA: THE HUMANIST AT THE COURT OF NERO. *By Villy Sørensen, translated by W. Glyn Jones. University of Chicago Press. $25.*

Reviewed by G. W. BOWERSOCK

In the brief and sanguinary lifetime of Nero, three brothers from Cordoba in southern Spain achieved high visibility in the society of Rome. One, the proconsul Gallio, is best known for his encounter with the apostle Paul in Corinth. Another ostentatiously eschewed the career of a senator in order to accumulate a large fortune as a Roman knight. And the third taught the young Nero late in the reign of Claudius and subsequently served as a trusted counsellor when the boy became emperor. That brother was Seneca. The father of these three Spanish Romans had been an eminent rhetorician with important friends. In fact, Seneca owed his admission to the senate to the influence of his aunt, the first of several powerful women in his life. But the social and political connections of the Cordoban family in the aristocracy of Neronian Rome explain only partially the rise of Seneca's brothers. It was Seneca himself who undoubtedly caused their fortunes to prosper. Furthermore, his nephew Lucan wrote a long epic poem under Nero on the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, and he began it with a fulsome panegyric of imperial rule and the incumbent ruler. Although both Seneca and Lucan perished in the wave of suspicion that surrounded the detection of a conspiracy against the emperor in A.D. 65, there can be no mistaking the allegiance of the entire family

G. W. BOWERSOCK, professor of ancient history at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, is the author of several books, including *Julian the Apostate* and the recently published *Roman Arabia*.

THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR
announces a sale of
SELECTED BACKCOPIES

A limited number of backcopies of *The American Scholar* are being offered at a reduced cost per copy. Following is a list of issues available for $2.00 per copy *plus* shipping charges:

Pub. Year	Vol. Number	Issue Number
1954	Vol. 23	Nos. 2-3
1956	Vol. 25	No. 2
1957	Vol. 26	No. 3
1958	Vol. 27	No. 3
1959	Vol. 28	Nos. 2-4
1960	Vol. 29	Nos. 1, 3-4
1964	Vol. 33	No. 4
1965	Vol. 34	No. 4
1966	Vol. 35	Nos. 3-4
1967	Vol. 36	Nos. 2-4
1968	Vol. 37	Nos. 1-4
1969	Vol. 38	Nos. 2-4
1970	Vol. 39	Nos. 1-4
1971	Vol. 40	Nos. 1-4
1972	Vol. 41	Nos. 1-4
1973	Vol. 42	Nos. 1-4
1974	Vol. 43	Nos. 1-4
1975	Vol. 44	Nos. 1-4
1976	Vol. 45	Nos. 1, 3-4
1977	Vol. 46	Nos. 1-4
1978	Vol. 47	Nos. 2-4
1979	Vol. 48	Nos. 1-4
1980	Vol. 49	Nos. 1-4

Send your request specifying year, volume, and issue members to:

BACKCOPY SERVICE
The American Scholar
1811 Q Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009

DO NOT SEND PAYMENT. You will be billed for the cost of copy(ies) plus shipping charges.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to Nero down to that year of terror. A martyr's death cannot wipe away a decade of collaboration.

Seneca poses, as few other figures in Roman history, the moral problem of how to behave under a vicious government. Although the ancient sources make reference to a tradition that the first five years of Nero's reign were not all that bad, Nero contrived the murder of his stepbrother and rival Britannicus in his first year on the throne. That cannot have left anyone in much doubt about the character of the successor to the doddering Claudius, recently dead after eating a poisoned mushroom. But the criminal tendencies of the young emperor were less worrying in those early years than the exceptional influence of his mother Agrippina, who endeavored to rule through him. She clearly knew something about poisons, and she certainly promoted the removal of her stepson in favor of her own child. Her capacity for crime was limited only by her inability to believe that Nero would be impelled one day to murder her. In the midst of all this stood the philosopher and moralist, Seneca of Cordoba, who owed his career at court to Agrippina.

For reasons that are still obscure, Seneca had been banished to Corsica under Claudius, and Agrippina had rightly counted on the unwavering loyalty of the exiled thinker if she were to bring him back to Rome and install him as tutor to the heir apparent. Seneca was therefore devoted to the imperial household, to his own and his family's considerable advantage. Many a philosopher might have been uncomfortable in Seneca's position, but he persuaded himself (as most people in uncomfortable positions do) that he could accomplish some benefit for mankind. He could instruct the prince in the principles of benevolent monarchy; he could provide him with manuals of virtue and good sense.

If the earlier years of Nero's reign were less horrifying than the later ones, this could be due to the restraining influence of the philosopher Seneca. Or it could just as well be a reflection of the gradual deterioration of Nero. No one except Dr. Jekyll becomes a monster instantaneously. It is clear that even the great Roman historian Tacitus, writing only half a century later, found Seneca hard to fathom. His Seneca is a far more sympathetic figure than the creature to be found in a history written in Greek by the Anatolian Cassius Dio in the early third century A.D. Dio had no hesitation in saying what most people must have thought from antiquity to the present:

> His conduct was seen to be diametrically opposed to the teachings of his philosophy, for while denouncing tyranny he was making himself the teacher of a tyrant; while inveighing against the associates of the powerful, he did not hold aloof from the palace himself, and though he had nothing good to say of flatterers, he himself had constantly fawned upon Messalina and the freedmen of Claudius.

Seneca's flattery can still be read in the abject missive *ad Polybium,* sent from Corsica. Tacitus, who yields to no one in cynicism, was curiously reluctant to judge Seneca as Dio did. As Ronald Syme has pointed out, without Tacitus we would have no record at all of Seneca as a statesman. It is Tacitus who suggests that Seneca was trying to do some good in his role at court by reconciling the precepts of philosophy with the realities of political life.

Why Tacitus was so interested in Seneca's role is open to legitimate debate, but the most obvious reason is not often stated. Tacitus's own career had prospered during the infamy of the Domitianic era, and he, like many of his contemporaries, had much to explain away in the time of relative felicity that followed the assassination of Domitian. Much of what Tacitus and Pliny wrote in the early second century A.D. can be seen as an attempt to explain and perhaps even to justify their advancement under the rule of a murderous tyrant. Tacitus was obsessed with this subject, as his treatment of Thrasea Paetus in the *Annals* makes plain. When Nero wiped out Thrasea and another philosopher in A.D. 66, Tacitus was moved to remark that the emperor wanted to eliminate virtue itself. Thrasea had refused to cooperate with the Neronian regime, and one day, in A.D. 59, he walked out of the senate. But for Tacitus the gesture was empty: it simply put Thrasea himself in greater danger and did nothing to make others free (*sibi causam periculi fecit, ceteris libertatis initium non praebuit*).

This problem of moral conduct is equally at the heart of Villy Sørensen's book on Seneca, recently translated from a Danish original that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was first published in 1976. Despite the fullness of Sørensen's account and his explicit delineation of dilemmas that Tacitus left implicit, the Roman historian still provides a more searching and subtle analysis. Overall it is hard to see what Sørensen's intentions were in writing this book. It provoked no interest whatever among classical historians when it appeared in Danish. Its treatment of Seneca's essays and dramas is as superficial as its handling of his political role. One cannot escape the impression that Sørensen sees himself as a kind of latter-day Seneca (viewed, of course, in an essentially favorable light). The subtitle of the work, *The Humanist at the Court of Nero*, gives the game away.

In one important respect Sørensen is conspicuously close to the old Roman philosopher. His book is just about as boring in translation as are most of the prose works of Seneca in translation. (The tragedies, dating perhaps from the Corsican exile, are another matter because their flamboyant plots and hysterical rhetoric survive translation.) Stripped of the original words, the thoughts of both Seneca and Sørensen emerge as pompous and banal, whereas the two writers are justly considered elegant and accomplished stylists in their mother tongues. Sørensen's ruminations are accorded respect in Denmark, partly (I am told) in deference to his superior Danish style. Similarly, Seneca is a far more interesting writer in Latin than he is in any translation. The pointed Senecan style was not only admired at the time but also in the subsequent generation. It became so fashionable after the great man's death that Quintilian, a noted professor of rhetoric, strongly advised that the young be kept away from Seneca's corrupting prose. The craft descended in the family, as can be seen from the pungent hexameters of Lucan's epic poem (which Robert Lowell once told me he admired more than Virgil's).

Sørensen's translator has disconcertingly maintained the Danish spellings for familiar classical names, and in some cases he has produced some very odd transformations. It is unsettling to find Epicurus called Epicure over and over again. All this makes a book that is already hard to read even more so. It is difficult to understand why the Press at the University of Chicago had it translated in the first place and then chose to issue it in an opulent format with plates of higher quality

A.R.A.

Academic Research Associates

Academic Research Associates is at your service to honor requests for search and /or retrieval of source material located in New York City's great institutional libraries, as well as in smaller, specialized repositories.

Requests from individual clients and university I.L.L. Departments are filled promptly, and we bill only for work completed.

We provide an entire range of reproduction processes...hard copy, microfilm and 35mm.

For further information, write:

Academic Research Associates,
719 Greenwich Street,
New York, NY 10014

OSIRIS
SECOND SERIES

A Research Journal Devoted to the History of Science and Its Cultural Influences

Columbia University's Robert K. Merton calls the new series of *Osiris*, "a *must* for every research library and every serious student of the history of science." Under the editorial direction of Arnold Thackray, *Osiris* presents major themes and interpretations in a field of scholarship that is central to our culture.

VOLUME 1 : *Historical Writing on American Science.* Guest-edited by Sally Gregory Kohlstedt and Margaret Rossiter. Fifteen essays survey the major concepts, disciplines, institutions, and policies of American science. (Available now.)

VOLUME 2 : Authoritative monographs by major scholars, including Garland E. Allen (on the Eugenics Record Office), David C. Lindberg (on Kepler's optics and the Neoplatonic tradition), Ernst Mayr (on J. G. Kolreuter's contribution to biology), James Reardon-Anderson (on chemical industry in China), and Susan Wright (on recombinant DNA technology). (Available November 1985.)

Send your orders *today* to History of Science Society Publications Office EJ, 215 South 34th Street/D6, Philadelphia, PA 19104, USA, or call TOLL-FREE (orders only please)
1-800-341-1522

DATATEL-800™ 8 a.m.–9 p.m. Weekdays
9 a.m.–5 p.m. Saturdays

Price per volume (individuals only): $24, hardcover; $15, paper.
Institutional subscriptions also available.
ISSN 0369-7827

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

than the text. If Sørensen and Seneca were drawn to each other because they are kindred spirits, one could hardly expect an adequate appreciation of Seneca's endless compromises, excuses, flattery, and avoidance of the plain truth. Only in A.D. 62, when Seneca's consort in power at court, the Praetorian Prefect Afranius Burrus, died, did Seneca actually confront the paradox of service to a corrupt regime. But he did so in strictly political terms. Now without a strong ally, he realized that his safest course was to retire. This was perhaps not the honorable solution, but Seneca was always more prudent than honorable. He had managed over the years to acquire a vast estate, and, in the words of Syme, "the man of many millions devoted himself to the exquisite refinements of the plain life." That single sentence tells us more about Seneca than the whole of Sørensen's book.

Seneca's secret of survival and influence was his knack of knowing when to look the other way. He professed ignorance when Britannicus was murdered and addressed a treatise on clemency to the young emperor soon afterwards. But during his grotesque death, which, according to Tacitus, came slowly because the blood of the aged man flowed so sluggishly from his severed veins, Seneca is made to recall that early crime. When Nero murdered his mother four years after Britannicus, Seneca dealt with the loss of the woman who had restored him from exile by promulgating an official lie that she had committed suicide after an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate her son. Seneca must have been quick to realize that he had to reassure Nero of his loyalty. In a famous letter in which the philosopher expresses suitably humanitarian sentiments of revulsion about gladiatorial sports, Seneca says to his correspondent, "You are teaching a man to be cruel who cannot learn." If Sørensen's view is right, as it may well be, that the reference here is to Seneca himself, we can readily understand how he managed to wade philosophically through Nero's bloodbath.

Sørensen nowhere shows any awareness that Tacitus and Pliny, among others, made important observations, based on their own experience, about the problem of a humanist in an evil regime. No one could forget that in former times the good and the honorable had sat down together with the corrupt and the wicked. Pliny sums it all up in one of his letters when he describes a dinner party in the happy years after the death of Domitian. The elderly new emperor, Nerva, is among the guests. The conversation turns to the blind informer Catullus Messalinus, one of the most hated and destructive agents of Domitian. He is now dead, but the emperor wonders out loud what would have become of him, had he survived. A certain Junius Mauricus shoots back the deadly response, "He would be dining with us."

Save the Scholars

in our special Library Cases

A recent poll of readers of *The American Scholar* tells us that 70% save their issues, at least for awhile. If you are one of the savers, you can keep your issues together for easy reference, protected by our own custom-designed open-back Library Cases. Each case holds 12 copies—3 full years of the *Scholar*. Cases are embossed with the journal's name on the spine, an attractive addition to any library shelf. Prices: $6.95 each; 3 for $20; 6 for $36. For orders outside U.S.A., add $2.50 per unit; prepay in U.S. funds only.

When ordering, indicate quantity and specify boxes for *The American Scholar*. All prices are postpaid. Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery.

Send ordering information with check or money order to

Jesse Jones Box Corp.
P.O. Box 5120 • Philadelphia, PA 19141

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Reader Replies

Women in Greek Myth

I wish to raise three questions about Professor Lefkowitz's article in the Spring 1985 SCHOLAR.

First, why does Professor Lefkowitz base the argument of her important penultimate paragraph on the word *parthenos* (virgin)? That word is but a translation—and an editorial comment. Isaiah was not, after all, written originally in Greek, and the word at 7:14, translated *parthenos* (virgin), was not *bethulah* (virgin) but *almah* (young woman). So Professor Lefkowitz's reliance on *parthenos* is puzzling.

Second, why does Professor Lefkowitz think that Mary was chosen *theotokos* "because she is a virgin" (despite the mistranslation of Isaiah)? I can find no shred of evidence to support such a contention—and, indeed, there were surely many virgins available. (Times do indeed appear to have changed. . . .) In fact, election, in Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament alike, is a function of arbitrary divine choice and action, rather than a matter of merit, "form or comeliness," sexual abstinence, or any other erotic (in the widest sense) achievement. So far is Athens from Jerusalem, it seems, that Athens can no longer even understand what Jerusalem is about.

And, third (I can't resist), if the procreative function was the only reason to "drag in" a woman for the incarnation of the Word, and if Mary was indeed a virgin, why should the Almighty have "bothered" with a woman at all? Is there a "feminist" answer to this question?

GILBERT E. DOAN, JR.
Pastor
The Lutheran Church
of the Holy Communion
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

MARY R. LEFKOWITZ replies: (1) It is not I who interpreted *parthenos* ("young girl") as "virgin," but the writer of the Gospel according to Matthew 1:23, whom Luke (presumably) is following. According to the Reverend Dr. A. E. Harvey, *Companion to the New Testament* (Oxford/Cambridge, 1973) 19: "But in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which Matthew used, the word could (though it did not necessarily) mean 'virgin,' and so to Matthew's mind the text [Isaiah 7:14] provided a startlingly exact prophecy of the event he had just recorded."

(2) I would not presume to know what was going on in God's mind; my point is simply that of the many good qualities Mary may have possessed, Luke chooses to emphasize her virginity.

(3) Why did God choose a *woman* as the means of the incarnation? To fulfill the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14. And perhaps Luke's gentile audience would have welcomed the story of a god's union with a mortal as evidence that the child would be extraordinary. Unfortunately, being a woman doesn't entitle me to know if there is an official "feminist" answer to this question

Readers' Rights & Writers' Property

The Public Lending Right advocated by William B. Goodman (Summer 1985) may indeed be a good thing, but the argument attempting to equate the borrowing of library books with theft is nonsense. Mr. Goodman argues: "What must not be lost here is the fact that the text of a book is property. It belongs to its creator, to the man or woman who wrote it. Copyright—the formal registration of property under law—confirms that property right."

Copyright does not confirm some prior right. Copyright is the right of an author under the law. Absent copyright, an author's work is free for reproduction or use by anyone, is said to be in the "public domain." Among the rights granted to the owner of a copyright are the rights to reproduce the work and to prepare derivative works. The right to read has never been one of the rights granted by the copyright law, and it has never been held that the reading of a work is an infringement of the copyright.

Furthermore, there is a well-established distinction in copyright law between the ownership of a copyright and the ownership of a material object in which the work is embodied. If you own a book, even though the book is fully protected by copy-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

right, you can still hollow out the pages and make a cigarette box out of it if you are so inclined. Thus, the lending of a book, whether by a library or by an individual to a friend, is not and never has been the *infringement* of anyone's copyright.

I am not arguing against the creation of a system of compensation for authors based on library use, but simply pointing out that the argument for it rests on a thin foundation indeed if it is based on the notion that all these years public libraries and borrowers have been engaging in theft.

SAUL COHEN
Santa Fe, New Mexico

WILLIAM B. GOODMAN replies: In citing where American copyright law is now, Saul Cohen squanders the obvious and misses the point. If the grievance writers allege, and which PLR would meet, were met by the terms of the current copyright law, there would have been lawsuits long since seeking to satisfy the grievance. I know of none, and given the present terms of copyright, doubtless such suits would fail, however interesting they might be. Thus the "theft" I find is not prevented by copyright as it stands.

The point my essay tries to make is that the meaning of literary property is greater than that comprehended by the current amended copyright statute. The issue is not the simple one of nonsense Mr. Cohen pounces upon but rather the one Senator Mathias and others would have explored by a national commission of inquiry. To wit: Is PLR a proper remedy for the grievance writers allege public libraries visit upon them by the continuous lending of their copyrighted books without compensation *per loan* to them?

The process by which the national legislature constitutionally modifies and extends current law to repair freshly perceived defects in such law is as old as the republic. If the repair that advocates of PLR propose is passed in some form into law in due course, then Mr. Cohen's "nonsense" will become, even to him, the plainest sense.

Remembering Thornton Wilder

"Curious that, in this age," Elder Olson writes in the Summer 1985 issue, "any supposedly educated person would think the question [of an artist's sex life] of importance." An equally sweeping dismissal of the validity of sexual analysis may be found in the same issue in Robert Leiter's letter of reply to Louis Crompton about his review of Phyllis Robinson's life of Willa Cather.

How important is it to an understanding of Melville's vision of life to know that his father went bankrupt? What difference would it make in any assessment we might make of the career of Stephen Crane if we ignored the fact that he was brought up in a Methodist parsonage? The answers to these questions are self-evident.

Why, then, do Messrs. Olson and Leiter wish to rule out the matter of a writer's sex life as unworthy of biographical exploration? Is it because they think of sex as dirty?

KENNETH S. LYNN
Washington, D.C.

The Merely Personal

In "The Merely Personal" (Summer 1985), Jeremy Bernstein makes the sound point that "the 'merely personal,' when in the hands of a real writer, becomes something else and, when in the hands of a non-writer, usually turns into dross." May I add the apparently trivial point that "real writer" and "non-writer" ought to include translators?

For, if Primo Levi's marvelously written Italian books have been translated into an English that has prompted someone with the acumen of Jeremy Bernstein to call Levi a master, then surely the translator deserves the highest praise. For it is undeniable that translations by prosers or poetasters can (and do) murder the works of superb stylists. How many of Freud's translators have done justice to Freud? Is the Norwegian dialogue of Ibsen characters as wooden as the English dialogue of Ibsen translators?

I shudder hypothermally at the thought of a *Pravda* editorialist undertaking a translation into Russian of Jeremy Bernstein's beautifully written *Three Degrees Above Zero*.

BERNARD ADELMAN
Winthrop, Massachusetts

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Index to Volume 54

Pagination of the volume is divided as follows: Winter, 1–144; Spring, 145–288; Summer, 289–432; Autumn, 433–576. Listed in *Reader's Guide*.

Adams, Robert M., **Cyril Connolly and the Man of Letters** (Reappraisal), 99

Advocacy: **Readers' Rights & Writers' Property: The Public Lending Right,** *William B. Goodman,* 389

All in the Family: A Psychobiography of the Adamses, *Peter Shaw,* 501

Anderson, Jervis, **Cricket and Beyond: The Career of C. L. R. James,** 345

Aristides, **This Sporting Life** (Life and Letters), 15; **A Former Good Guy and His Friends** (Life and Letters), 151; **A Fat Man Struggles to Get Out** (Life and Letters), 303; **Everybody's Talking at Me** (Life and Letters), 439

Author's Mail, An, *Barbara Tuchman,* 313

Baehr, Anne-Ruth Ediger, **I am Dancing with My Mennonite Father** (The Mary Elinore Smith Poetry Prize), 326

Baida, Peter, **M.B.A.,** 23

Barker, Wendy, **The Swallow Watcher** (Poem), 344

Barzun, Jacques, **Behind the Blue Pencil: Censorship or Creeping Creativity?** (Publishing), 385

Behind the Blue Pencil: Censorship or Creeping Creativity? (Publishing), *Jacques Barzun,* 385

Bergman, David, **Old Man Sitting in a Shopping Mall** (Poem), 97

Bernstein, Jeremy, **Quantum Reality** (Out of My Mind), 7; **The Merely Personal** (Out of My Mind), 295

Beyond Resembling (Poem), *Gary Margolis,* 118

Biography: **The Most Amusing Book in the Language,** *Robert Worth Frank, Jr.,* 89

Blumenthal, Michael, **Lucky** (Poem), 328

Books, 121, 253, 404, 549

In Love with Politics, *Robert Nisbet,* 121, review of *Selected Letters of Edmund Burke* edited with an introduction by Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr.

Going, Going, Gone, *Roger Kimball,* 126, review of *When Words Lose Their Meaning: Constitutions and Reconstitutions of Language, Character, and Community* by James Boyd White.

Her Own Story, *Marnie Jones,* 129, review of *Vanessa Bell* by Frances Spalding.

Hard Times, *R. A. Peace,* 133, review of *Dostoevsky: The Years of Ordeal, 1850–1859* by Joseph Frank.

Talk Show, *Jacob A. Stein,* 135, review of *Desmond MacCarthy: The Man and His Writings* introduced by David Cecil.

Ragtime, *John Patrick Diggins,* 138, review of *Outgrowing Democracy: America in the Twentieth Century* by John Lukacs.

The Exalted Task, *Christian F. Otto,* 141, review of *The Decorated Diagram: Harvard Architecture and the Failure of the Bauhaus Legacy* by Klaus Herdeg.

The Phantom Ghost of Modernism, *George Watson,* 253.

Dr. No, *Wilfred M. McClay,* 268, review of *Adorno* by Martin Jay.

Saved by Literature, *Mary Lago,* 272, review of *Edmund Gosse: A Literary Landscape, 1849–1928* by Ann Thwaite.

In Pursuit of the Past, *Christian F. Otto,* 276, review of *McKim, Mead & White, Architects* by Leland M. Roth and *McKim, Mead & White* by Richard Guy Wilson.

Remembering the Questions, *Elie Kedourie,* 280, review of *Reflections of a Neoconservative: Looking Back, Looking Ahead* by Irving Kristol.

Remembering Thornton Wilder, *Elder Olson,* 404, review of *The Enthusiast: A Life of Thornton Wilder* by Gilbert A. Harrison.

Uncivil Tongue, *Vernon Young,* 414, review of *The Nightmare Years, 1930–1940.* Volume 2: *Twentieth Century Journey: A Memoir of a Life and the Times* by William L. Shirer.

Victor Ego, *Eugen Weber,* 418, review of *Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel* by Victor Brombert.

Papa Knows Best, *Amy L. Wax,* 419, review of *The Silent World of Doctor and Patient* by Jay Katz and *A Leg to Stand On* by Oliver Sacks.

The Sister Seven, *Mary R. Lefkowitz,* 424, review of *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930s* by Helen L. Horowitz.

Valid Knowledge, *Paul Oskar Kristeller,* 428, review of *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship.* Volume 1: *Textual Criticism and Exegesis* by Anthony Grafton.

History According to Saint Joan, *G. R. Elton,* 549, review of *Women, History and Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly* by Joan Kelly.

Jesuitical, *James Hitchcock,* 555, review of *The Jesuits: History and Legend of the Society of Jesus* by Manfred Barthel, translated and adapted by Mark Howson.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Old Thunder, *Sonya Rudikoff,* 556, review of *Hilaire Belloc* by A. N. Wilson.
The Hidden Trunk, *Donna Rifkind,* 563, review of *Hawthorne's Secret: An Un-Told Tale* by Philip Young.
Tyrant's Teacher, *G. W. Bowersock,* 567, review of *Seneca: The Humanist at the Court of Nero* by Villy Sørensen, translated by W. Glyn Jones.
Bowersock, G. W., **Tyrant's Teacher** (BOOKS), 567
Breathing in Bogotá (Poem), *Norbert Krapf,* 98
Byrne, Edward, **Winslow Homer: Prout's Neck, Maine** (Poem), 206

Clausen, Christopher, **A Decent Impersonality** (MANNERS), 537
CONTEMPORARY HISTORY: **Understanding Lebanon,** *Leila Fawaz,* 377
Crews, Frederick, **Dialectical Immaterialism,** 449
Cricket and Beyond: The Career of C. L. R. James, *Jervis Anderson,* 345
Crim, Elias, **A Little Visit to the Stalin Museum** (TRAVEL), 106
Crowded Raft, The: *Huckleberry Finn* **& Its Critics** (LITERATURE), *J. C. Furnas,* 517
Cyril Connolly and the Man of Letters (REAPPRAISAL), *Robert M. Adams,* 99

Dark Preface (Poem), *Peter Makuck,* 466
Davie, Donald, **Reminded of Bougainville** (Poem), 360
Dead Pigeon, The (Poem), *John Stone,* 402
Decent Impersonality, A (MANNERS), *Christopher Clausen,* 537
Di Piero, W. S., **The One-Year-Old Lemon Tree** (Poem), 403
Dialectical Immaterialism, *Frederick Crews,* 449
Diggins, John Patrick, **Ragtime** (BOOKS), 138
Distant Cry, A (Poem), *Lucy Shawgo,* 536
Dr. No (BOOKS), *Wilfred M. McClay,* 268
Dreiser and Mencken: In the Literary Trenches (LITERATURE), *Thomas P. Riggio,* 227
Drink of Water, A (Poem), *John R. Reed,* 44

Early Sunday Morning (Poem), *John Stone,* 119
Elton, G. R., **History According to Saint Joan** (BOOKS), 549
Everybody's Talking at Me (LIFE AND LETTERS), *Aristides,* 439
Exalted Task, The (BOOKS), *Christian F. Otto,* 141
Extended Family (Poem), *A. K. Ramanujan,* 181

F. R. Leavis (MEMOIR), *Dan Jacobson,* 221
Fargas, Laura, **The Protection of Dust** (Poem), 500
Fat Man Struggles to Get Out, A (LIFE AND LETTERS), *Aristides,* 303
Fawaz, Leila, **Understanding Lebanon** (CONTEMPORARY HISTORY), 377
Former Good Guy and His Friends, A (LIFE AND LETTERS), *Aristides,* 151
Frank, Robert Worth, Jr., **The Most Amusing Book in the Language** (BIOGRAPHY), 89
Frend, W. H. C., **The Rise of Christianity** (RELIGION), 397
Furnas, J. C., **The Crowded Raft:** *Huckleberry Finn* **& Its Critics** (LITERATURE), 517

Gay, Ruth, **What I Learned About German Jews,** 467
Gershom Scholem (RELIGION), *Ada Rapoport-Albert,* 541
Going, Going, Gone (BOOKS), *Roger Kimball,* 126
Goodman, William B., **Readers' Rights & Writers' Property: The Public Lending Right** (ADVOCACY), 389
Gray, Alice Wirth, **He Was When He Died** (Poem), 179

Hall, Donald, **The Poetry Reading: Public Performance/Private Art,** 63
Hard Times (BOOKS), *R. A. Peace,* 133
He Was When He Died (Poem), *Alice Wirth Gray,* 179
Her Own Story (BOOKS), *Marnie Jones,* 129
Hidden Trunk, The (BOOKS), *Donna Rifkind,* 563
HISTORIOGRAPHY: **The Record of the Losers: A Consideration of Pietro Giannone,** *Harold Stone,* 111
History According to Saint Joan (BOOKS), *G. R. Elton,* 549
Hitchcock, James, **Jesuitical** (BOOKS), 555
Hook, Sidney, **The Radical Comedians: Inside** *Partisan Review,* 45
Hooper, Patricia, **Reunion** (Poem), 484

I Am Dancing with My Mennonite Father (THE MARY ELINORE SMITH POETRY PRIZE), *Anne-Ruth Ediger Baehr,* 326
In Love with Politics (BOOKS), *Robert Nisbet,* 121
In Pursuit of the Past (BOOKS), *Christian F. Otto,* 276

Jacobson, Dan, **F. R. Leavis** (MEMOIR), 221
Jesuitical (BOOKS), *James Hitchcock,* 555
Jones, Marnie, **Her Own Story** (BOOKS), 129
Julia, *John Wain,* 78

Kedourie, Elie, **Remembering the Questions** (BOOKS), 280
Kimball, Roger, **Going, Going, Gone** (BOOKS), 126
Krapf, Norbert, **Breathing in Bogotá** (Poem), 98
Kristeller, Paul Oskar, **Valid Knowledge** (BOOKS), 428
Kuehn, Heinz R., **Visits to a Morgue,** 363

Lago, Mary, **Saved by Literature** (BOOKS), 272

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Large and Little School Teaching: Reed College and UCLA, *Lauro Martines*, 194
Last Words of Don Quixote (Poem), *Paul Petrie*, 248
LAW: **Louis D. Brandeis Reappraised,** *Thomas K. McCraw*, 525
Lefkowitz, Mary R., **Women in Greek Myth,** 207; **The Sister Seven** (BOOKS), 424
LIFE AND LETTERS: **This Sporting Life,** *Aristides*, 15; **A Former Good Guy and His Friends,** *Aristides*, 151; **A Fat Man Struggles to Get Out,** *Aristides*, 303; **Everybody's Talking at Me,** *Aristides*, 439
LITERATURE: **Dreiser and Mencken: In The Literary Trenches,** *Thomas P. Riggio*, 227; **The Crowded Raft: *Huckleberry Finn* & Its Critics,** *J. C. Furnas*, 517
Little Visit to the Stalin Museum, A (TRAVEL), *Elias Crim*, 106
Logodrama (Poem), *Greg Moss*, 62
Louis D. Brandeis Reappraised (LAW), *Thomas K. McCraw*, 525
Lucky (Poem), *Michael Blumenthal*, 328

McClay, Wilfred M., **Dr. No** (BOOKS), 268
McCraw, Thomas K., **Louis D. Brandeis Reappraised** (LAW), 525
Makuck, Peter, **Dark Preface** (Poem), 466
MANNERS: **Mrs. Post, May I Present Mr. Eliot,** *Wylie Sypher*, 250; **A Decent Impersonality,** *Christopher Clausen*, 537
Margolis, Gary, **Beyond Resembling** (Poem), 118
Martines, Lauro, **Large and Little School Teaching: Reed College and UCLA,** 194
MARY ELINORE SMITH POETRY PRIZE, THE: **I Am Dancing with My Mennonite Father,** *Anne-Ruth Ediger Baehr*, 326
M.B.A., *Peter Baida*, 23
MEMOIR: **F. R. Leavis,** *Dan Jacobson*, 221
Merely Personal, The (OUT OF MY MIND), *Jeremy Bernstein*, 295
Moss, Greg, **Logodrama** (Poem), 62
Most Amusing Book in the Language, The BIOGRAPHY *Robert Worth Frank, Jr.*, 89
Mrs. Post, May I Present Mr. Eliot (MANNERS), *Wylie Sypher*, 250

Nisbet, Robert, **In Love with Politics** (BOOKS), 121

O'Neill, Brian, **Photograph: Father and Grandfather Fishing the Pier at Michigan City** (Poem), 42
Old Man Sitting in a Shopping Mall (Poem), *David Bergman*, 97
Old Thunder (BOOKS), *Sonya Rudikoff*, 556
Olson, Elder, **Remembering Thornton Wilder** (BOOKS), 404
One-Year-Old Lemon Tree, The (Poem), *W. S. Di Piero*, 403
Otto, Christian F., **The Exalted Task** (Books), 141; **In Pursuit of the Past** (BOOKS), 276
OUT OF MY MIND: **Quantum Reality,** *Jeremy Bernstein*, 7; **The Merely Personal,** *Jeremy Bernstein* 295

Papa Knows Best (BOOKS), *Amy L. Wax*, 419
Peace, R. A., **Hard Times** (BOOKS), 133
Petrie, Paul, **Last Words of Don Quixote** (Poem), 248
Phantom Ghost of Modernism, The (BOOKS), *George Watson*, 253
Photograph: Father and Grandfather Fishing the Pier at Michigan City (Poem), *Brian O'Neill*, 42
Poetry Reading, The: Public Performance/Private Art, *Donald Hall*, 63
Portrait of a Young Physician, *Howard F. Stein*, 485
Pritchard, William H., **Reuben A. Brower** (TEACHING), 239
Protection of Dust, The (Poem), *Laura Fargas*, 500
PUBLISHING: **Behind the Blue Pencil: Censorship or Creeping Creativity?,** *Jacques Barzun*, 385

Quantum Reality (OUT OF MY MIND), *Jeremy Bernstein*, 7

Radical Comedians, The: Inside *Partisan Review,* *Sidney Hook*, 45
Ragtime (BOOKS), *John Patrick Diggins*, 138
Rain of the Waldensians (Poem), *Brian Swann*, 204
Ramanujan, A. K., **Extended Family** (Poem), 181
Rapoport-Albert, Ada, **Gershom Scholem** (RELIGION), 541
Raymond Aron, *Edward Shils*, 161
Rea, Susan, **Weather Report** (Poem), 220
READER REPLIES, THE, 285, 431, 571
Readers' Rights & Writers' Property: The Public Lending Right (ADVOCACY), *William B. Goodman*, 389
REAPPRAISAL: **Cyril Connolly and the Man of Letters,** *Robert M. Adams*, 99
Record of the Losers, The: A Consideration of Pietro Giannone (HISTORIOGRAPHY), *Harold Stone*, 111
Reed, John R., **A Drink of Water** (Poem), 44
RELIGION: **The Rise of Christianity,** *W. H. C. Frend*, 397; **Gershom Scholem,** *Ada Rapoport-Albert*, 541
Remembering the Questions (BOOKS), *Elie Kedourie*, 280
Remembering Thornton Wilder (BOOKS), *Elder Olson*, 404
Remembering World War II: The Perspective of the Losers, *James D. Wilkinson*, 329
Reminded of Bougainville (Poem), *Donald Davie*, 360
Reuben A. Brower (TEACHING), *William H. Pritchard*, 239

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reunion (Poem), *Patricia Hooper*, 484
Rifkind, Donna, **The Hidden Trunk** (Books), 563
Riggio, Thomas P., **Dreiser and Mencken: In the Literary Trenches** (Literature), 227
Rise of Christianity, The (Religion), *W. H. C. Frend*, 397
Rosenberg, Marjorie, **A Sad Heart at the Department Store**, 183
Rudikoff, Sonya, **Old Thunder** (Books), 556

Sad Heart at the Department Store, A, *Marjorie Rosenberg*, 183
Saved by Literature (Books), *Mary Lago*, 272
Shaw, Peter, **All in the Family: A Psychobiography of the Adamses**, 501
Shawgo, Lucy, **A Distant Cry** (Poem), 536
Shils, Edward, **Raymond Aron**, 161
Sister Seven, The (Books), *Mary R. Lefkowitz*, 424
Stein, Howard F., **Portrait of a Young Physician**, 485
Stein, Jacob A., **Talk Show** (Books), 135
Stone, Harold, **The Record of the Losers: A Consideration of Pietro Giannone** (Historiography), 111
Stone, John, **Early Sunday Morning** (Poem), 119; **The Dead Pigeon** (Poem), 402
Swallow Watcher, The (Poem), *Wendy Barker*, 344
Swann, Brian, **Rain of the Waldensians** (Poem), 204
Sypher, Wylie, **Mrs. Post, May I Present Mr. Eliot** (Manners), 250

Talk Show (Books), *Jacob A. Stein*, 135
Teaching: **Reuben A. Brower**, *William H. Pritchard*, 239
This Sporting Life (Life and Letters), *Aristides*, 15
Travel: **A Little Visit to the Stalin Museum**, *Elias Crim*, 106
Tuchman, Barbara, **An Author's Mail**, 313
Tyrant's Teacher (Books), *G. W. Bowersock*, 567

Uncivil Tongue (Books), *Vernon Young*, 414
Understanding Lebanon (Contemporary History), *Leila Fawaz*, 377

Valid Knowledge (Books), *Paul Oskar Kristeller*, 428
Victor Ego (Books), *Eugen Weber*, 418
Visits to a Morgue, *Heinz R. Kuehn*, 363

Wain, John, **Julia**, 78
Watson, George, **The Phantom Ghost of Modernism** (Books), 253
Wax, Amy L., **Papa Knows Best** (Books), 419
Weather Report (Poem), *Susan Rea*, 220
Weber, Eugen (Books), **Victor Ego**, 418
What I Learned About German Jews, *Ruth Gay*, 467
Wilkinson, James D., **Remembering World War II: The Perspective of the Losers**, 329
Winslow Homer: Prout's Neck, Maine (Poem), *Edward Byrne*, 206
Women in Greek Myth, *Mary Lefkowitz*, 207

Young, Vernon, **Uncivil Tongue** (Books), 414

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHICAGO

RENAISSANCE ESSAYS
Hugh Trevor-Roper

This volume, gathering together pieces on British and European history from the fifteenth to the early seventeenth centuries, confirms Trevor-Roper's reputation as a spectacular writer of history and master essayist.

Cloth $22.50 294 pages

Three superbly illustrated paperbacks by
E. H. Gombrich
"Distinctly the most interesting art historian of his generation." — *Book Week*

MEDITATIONS ON A HOBBY HORSE
And Other Essays on the Theory of Art

Paper $14.95 192 pages 135 b&w illustrations

NORM AND FORM
Studies in the Art of the Renaissance, I
With a new Preface

Paper $14.95 176 pages 186 b&w illustrations

SYMBOLIC IMAGES
Studies in the Art of the Renaissance, II

Paper $14.95 256 pages 170 b&w illustrations

THE LISLE LETTERS
An Abridgement
Edited by **Muriel St. Clare Byrne**
Selected and Arranged by **Bridget Boland**
Foreword by **Hugh Trevor-Roper**

A one-volume abridgement of the acclaimed six-volume work is now available in paperback. These sixteenth-century letters paint a vivid portrait of family life amidst the politics, intrigue, and terror of the court of Henry VIII.

"As moving and powerful as any novel I have read in years. . . . a concise, compelling, gloriously readable human drama of good people caught in desperate times." — James Goldman, *Chicago Tribune Book World*

Paper $12.95 446 pages

GETTING INTO PRINT
The Decision-Making Process in Scholarly Publishing
Walter W. Powell

Powell presents fascinating case studies of "Apple" Press and "Plum" Press, two well-known commercial publishers of scholarly books, that reveal the inside story of how, and why, manuscripts are selected for publication.

"I recommend the book to all who are concerned with the dissemination of research and the publishing of serious books." — John G. Ryden, Director, Yale University Press

Cloth $19.95 296 pages

The University of CHICAGO Press
5801 South Ellis Avenue, Chicago, IL 60637

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Journals of Thornton Wilder, 1939–1961

With Two Scenes of an Uncompleted Play, "The Emporium"

Selected and edited by Donald Gallup
Foreword by Isabel Wilder

"What is here is **invaluable, a permanent part of American literature.** All of the material about Wilder's own plays, finished and unfinished, is crucial and astonishing — one of the rarest examples I know of the kind of self-criticism one has always hoped to find in the masters but almost never does." —Richard Howard

"[This book] is **among the great American literary documents,** deserving a place beside the journals of Emerson and Thoreau." —Malcolm Cowley
$25.00

The Illustrated Zuleika Dobson

Max Beerbohm
Introduction by N. John Hall

This delightful book is a facsimile of Beerbohm's private copy of his only full-length novel, which he illustrated with some eighty watercolor and pencil drawings for his own and his family's pleasure. Available for the first time to the public in full color and original size, the illustrations — elegant, graceful, fanciful, and satiric — are precise visual embodiments of Beerbohm's prose.

"**Delightful.**" —Michiko Kakutani, *The New York Times* 80 color illus. $19.95

John Ruskin: The Early Years

Tim Hilton

This authoritative biography of the most influential nineteenth-century critic of art and society provides fresh insight into the background and content of Ruskin's numerous books. The first of two projected volumes, it covers the period from 1819 to 1859 and describes the events, loves, travels, and literary and artistic movements that influenced Ruskin's work.

"**Stupendous.**" —Fiona McCarthy, *The Times* (London) Illus. $22.50

Courtesy National Portrait Gallery, London

Yale University Press Dept. 014J 92A Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED